

Dal Tadka

Medium · Vegetarian · ± 4 people · 45 min · Ahead: 4–5 hrs soaking

Today we're making Dal Tadka with chana dal, also known as yellow split peas. What makes it special are the two components we bring together: the simmered lentil curry and a separate, sizzling tadka of ghee with cumin, garlic and chili.

The dish is rich in protein and easy to make vegan. Note: yellow split peas are dry, so soak them for 4–5 hours before you start.

Spiciness. This is the amount of chilli as it is used in India. For a milder dish, leave the dried red chilli out of the tadka and use half the Kashmiri chili powder. The rest stays the same.

Tip. Swap the ghee for oil for a fully vegan dish. Serve with rice, poori or naan.

Ingredients

For the dal

- 250 g yellow split peas (chana dal), soaked at least 4–5 hours
- 2 large red onions, finely diced
- 3 medium roma or vine tomatoes, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- 3 tbsp (sunflower) oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1½ tsp Kashmiri chili powder (or less regular chili powder)
- ½ tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp garam masala
- salt to taste

For the tadka

- 1 tbsp ghee (or olive oil for a vegan version)
- ½ tsp cumin seeds
- 1 dried red chili
- 2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped

To finish

- pinch of garam masala
- fresh coriander leaves (optional)
- fresh lemon juice

Method

1. Rinse the split peas 3× until the water runs clear. Then soak them 4–5 hours in twice their volume of clean water (1 cup peas : 2 cups water). Keep the soaking water, we use it later.
2. Cook the dal: put the peas with their soaking water in a pan, bring to a boil, cover and cook 7–10 min. Open occasionally and stir. They're done when they mash smooth but still have a small white core. Keep the cooking liquid.
3. Heat 3 tbsp oil over medium-high. Add 1 tsp cumin seeds; after ~10 sec they start to 'dance'. Add the onions and caramelize ~10 min until soft and almost translucent. Stir regularly and lower the heat if they stick.
4. Add the grated garlic and stir ~2 min until the raw smell is gone.
5. Lower the heat. Add the Kashmiri chili powder, turmeric and garam masala and fry ~2 min. A splash of warm water prevents burning. Done when the oil separates from the spices again.
6. Medium heat: add the tomatoes and 1 tsp salt, cover. Stir after 3–4 min; in ~10 min the tomatoes are done and only the pulp remains.
7. Add the cooked dal, mix and cook ~3 min over medium-high heat. Add ? cup water (or the cooking liquid) to your preferred thickness and cook another 3–4 min.
8. Make the tadka: in a small pan heat 1 tbsp ghee or olive oil until it just smokes. Add ½ tsp cumin seeds, the dried red chili and the roughly chopped garlic. Give it 10–15 sec and don't let it burn.
9. Pour the tadka carefully over the dal (careful, it's hot!) and stir quickly. Finish with a pinch of garam masala, chopped coriander and a squeeze of fresh lemon when serving.