

# Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad



Spring is here! Time for salads and fun.

Spring is here! No really, I mean it. OK, so the northeast might still have snow and the south is already sweating, but hey– it's April– and no one can deny that. We had friends over on Saturday night and all I wanted was an easy dinner of finger foods, fun, and friends. Let's be honest– the first supplies I bought for dinner were the cold liquor and the marshmallows for smores. I started with an antipasto platter of olives, cheese, summer sausage, and stuffed grape leaves, because that pretty much took five minutes to make. But I wanted a light salad that would be filling and knew that I needed to sneak some protein in there.

So I decided to try lentils in the crock pot as a perfect spring salad topping. I've never made them before, so I did a little reading online. I learned that vegetarians love lentils (no surprise) but that I should never-ever-de-ever put salt in the water when I am cooking them (good to know!). I also read

that you don't want lentils to get mushy, so I committed to cooking them on high instead of low.



Lentils are easy to cook and can be used in so many ways!

Lentils turned out to be ridiculously easy in the crock pot. First off, follow the directions about sifting through the lentils for stones or dirt or whatever hippies don't actually like to eat in their plant-based superfoods. Then, use a ratio of about one cup lentils to three cups water. You will have lots of excess water in the crockpot when the lentils are done, but you can easily use a slotted spoon to scoop the lentils out when they are done swimming.

I watched the crock pot a little more closely than I normally do because I really didn't want the lentils to be overdone. I had set it for 4 hours on high, but at about 3 hours, they were done. Next time, I'll know to set it for 3 hours and I can go about my business. This is what having a relationship with your crock pot is all about, but sometimes the trust has to be earned.

That's it— perfect protein-packed superfood ready to top my spring salad.

So I started with arugula. Added the strained lentils. Topped it with a little bit of sweet pepper relish (you could use regular fresh red peppers if you prefer. For the dressing, I

mixed together some fig balsamic vinegar with some herb-infused olive oil. If you have an olive oil store near you, it is totally worth getting these fun flavors and using them to make really easy dressings. Enjoy spring, people! Enjoy a fresh salad, a refreshing adult beverage, and some toasted marshmallows for dessert.

### **Crock Pot Arugula Lentil Salad**

**serves 6-8 as sides**

2 c. dried lentils

4 cloves garlic, peeled

6 c. water

5 oz. baby arugula, rinsed and chilled

3 T. sweet

pepper relish or 1/2 red pepper, diced

dressing to taste

Put lentils, garlic and water in the crock pot for 3 hrs on high. Use a slotted spoon to remove all lentils. Top arugula with lentils, red pepper, and toss with dressing. Enjoy!

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## **Crock Pot Vegetarian Lentil Soup**

There used to be this great Greek restaurant that I frequented that served lentil soup in a styrofoam cup. It was always hot

and fresh and the lentils were soft without being mushy. I would frame my entire meal around saving room and money for the soup. This recipe mirrors the flavors and warmth of the soup but without a disposable cup. Unlike my vegetarian vegetable soup which is savory and chunky, this lentil soup is hearty and robust with even more amazing health benefits. Lentils are high in protein, iron, amino acids and when you add in the lycopene in the tomatoes and then all the vitamins, folic acid and antioxidants in the spinach... this soup is like a power boost for your whole system. Oh yeah, and it tastes amazing too.

Feel free to serve it in a real bowl and maybe with some crusty bread instead of saltines.

2 cups lentils

8 cups vegetable broth

1 onion, diced

3 stalks celery, diced

2 carrots, chopped

6 oz. fresh spinach, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 t. salt

1/2 t. pepper

1 t. oregano

1 t. cumin

2 bay leaves

1/4 t. cayenne pepper

1 14 oz. can diced tomatoes

1 T. red wine vinegar

Put everything in the crockpot and cook on low for 8 hours, but add the vegetable broth LAST. Most likely, you won't have room to pour all the liquid in yet. Once the vegetables have all cooked down, then add the rest of the liquid. My 5-qt crock pot is filled to the rim by the time everything is included.

This soup also freezes really well, so save half the pot for a meal another time.