

SERVES 4

If there's time to get organized in advance, soak the lentils in cold water for a few hours, then drain and rinse them. If you're in a hurry, just wash the lentils. Put them into a saucepan, cover with cold water and simmer gently until they're tender - about 40 minutes if they've been soaked, 1-1½ hours if not, or around 15 minutes in a pressure cooker.

Meanwhile peel and chop the onion and crush the garlic. Fry them together in the oil for 5 minutes, then add the mushrooms and green pepper and cook for a further 5 minutes or so. Drain the lentils and stir them into the vegetable mixture, together with the tomatoes, wine, purée and seasonings. Let the mixture simmer gently while you cook the spaghetti in plenty of boiling, salted water. Drain it when it's just tender, put it back into the hot saucepan and add the butter, turning the spaghetti until the butter has melted and the spaghetti looks all glossy and appetizing. Then turn the spaghetti on to a warm serving dish, pour the lentil sauce on top of it and sprinkle with grated cheese. This is lovely with a crisp green salad.

SPAGHETTI WITH LENTIL AND TOMATO SAUCE

As split red lentils cook in under half an hour without soaking, this dish is useful for those times when you suddenly find yourself having to produce a meal quickly, particularly as the ingredients are basic store-cupboard ones. The protein content of this recipe is excellent, because the pulse and wholewheat complement each other.

PASTA AND PANCAKES

2 tablespoons oil	2 tablespoons red wine (if possible)
1 large onion, peeled and chopped	sea salt
1 large clove garlic, crushed	freshly ground black pepper
14 oz (397 g) can tomatoes	
½ teaspoon dried basil or oregano	<i>For spaghetti:</i>
½ teaspoon powdered cinnamon	8 oz (225 g) wholewheat or buckwheat spaghetti
8 oz (225 g) split red lentils, washed	½ oz (15 g) butter
½ pint (400 ml) water	<i>To serve:</i>
	a little grated cheese

SERVES 4

Heat the oil in a largish saucepan and fry the onion and garlic until they're tender - about 10 minutes; then add the tomatoes, herbs, cinnamon, lentils, water and wine and bring up to the boil. Simmer mixture with a lid on the saucepan for about 25 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Taste, and season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

About 10 minutes before the lentils are done, start cooking the spaghetti. Half-fill a large saucepan with water, add some sea salt and bring to the boil. Add the spaghetti to the saucepan by holding it upright in the boiling water and gradually pushing it down into the water as it softens. Simmer the spaghetti until it's just tender, or 'al dente', as the Italians say, then drain it and add the butter and a good grinding of black pepper. Pile the spaghetti on to a warm serving dish, pour the sauce on top and sprinkle with grated cheese. Serve with a nice crisp green salad.