



INGREDIENTS

- ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red onion, finely chopped
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 2 Roma tomatoes, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon Aleppo pepper chilli flakes (see below)
- 2½ cups (500g) red lentils
- 2 litres water
- 1 teaspoon dried mint
- ½ teaspoon chilli paste (see below)
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges
- Bread, for serving

Aleppo pepper (pul biber in Turkish) has quite a mild heat, if it's unavailable use any mild chilli flakes, or just a pinch of a hotter chilli. This soup is often served drizzled with a chilli oil, I make mine by combining sambal oelek with olive oil.

Turkish Lentil Soup (Mercimek Çorbası)

I lived on this delicious simple soup when I was in Turkey for three months in 1988. My recipe is adapted from one that I had on the Black Sea coast made by a young lady called Zerrin. A Turkish friend translated for me as she told us how to make it but, like many cooks, Zerrin held back one secret ingredient. Years later I tasted a version from a Turkish stall at Frenchs Forest markets and realised what had been missing from mine ... the aroma and flavour of dried mint took me straight back to Turkey! Enjoy it with a cold glass of Brash Higgins wild-ferment CHN chenin blanc, the balanced acidity is a perfect foil for the earthy lentils. Afiyet olsun!

Serves 8 as an entrée

METHOD

1. Heat ¼ cup of the oil in a saucepan over low heat.
2. Add onion and a good pinch of salt, cover and cook for 5-10 minutes, until soft but not coloured.
3. Stir in tomato and chilli flakes and cook for a further minute or so.
4. Stir in lentils and water and bring to the boil.
5. Reduce heat and simmer for about 20 minutes, until lentils are soft.
6. Remove from heat, stir in dried mint, cover and set aside for 10 minutes.
7. Puree with a stick blender, leaving a little texture. Taste and add salt.
8. Serve drizzled with remaining oil combined with chilli paste and with lemon wedges and bread on the side.