

## French Lentil and Root Vegetable Soup

½ cup French lentils  
¼ lb. pancetta, sliced ¼" thick and finely diced  
6 garlic cloves, minced  
2 carrots, finely diced  
2 celery ribs, finely diced  
1 onion, finely diced  
3 medium red potato, finely diced  
½ cup finely diced peeled celery root  
½ cup finely diced peeled butternut squash  
½ cup peeled rutabaga, finely diced  
1 bay leaf  
10 cups chicken stock  
2 Tbsp. chopped parsley  
1 Tbsp. chopped thyme  
¼ lb. Gruyère cheese, thinly shaved

In a small saucepan, cover the lentils with 3 inches of water and add a large pinch of salt. Cover and bring to a boil and simmer over low heat, stirring occasionally until lentils are tender, about 20 minutes.

In a large saucepan, cook the pancetta over low heat, stirring until most of the fat has been rendered, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic, carrots, celery, onion, celery root, squash, rutabaga and bay leaf and cook over high heat for 2 minutes, stirring to coat with fat. Season to taste. Cook until the vegetables are softened, about 3 minutes longer.

Add the chicken stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Discard the bay leaf.

Stir in the lentils, parsley and thyme. Taste for seasoning.

Ladle the soup into bowls, and top with Gruyère cheese.

**Lentils** are popular in France. There are three main varieties of lentils. French or European, sold with the seed case on, had a grayish –brown exterior and a yellow interior. The reddish orange and Egyptian lentils are smaller and rounder with no seed cover. The yellow lentil is the third type and all are used dried not fresh. In India it is know as Dal.

Makes 12 cups.

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