

## From Mumbai With Love Bowl

This selection is not so much a bowl as it is a thali, the Indian name for a round platter used to serve food. Thali is also used to refer to an Indian-style meal made up of a selection of various dishes which are served on a platter. The selection I've chosen for my thali is made up of some of the flavours that so remind me of Mumbai and the many, many lunches I shared with two of my best friends, Nivea from Goa and Elizabeth 'Liz' from Kerala. Their only desire is for me to enjoy the array of little tidbits a thali has to offer, as they eagerly explain the ingredients or cooking techniques while we're eating, and share the memories they have of home.



## ENOUGH TO MAKE 4 THALI PLATTERS

### SPICY DAHL

1 Tbsp (15 ml) coconut oil  
2 medium onions, halved and sliced  
1 green chilli, slit lengthwise  
1 medium tomato, finely chopped  
2 tsp (10 ml) garlic and ginger paste  
(page 43)  
1 tsp (5 ml) Kashmiri chilli powder  
½ tsp (2.5 ml) turmeric  
2 tsp (10 ml) ground cumin  
1½ C (375 ml) red lentils or masoor dhal,  
rinsed and soaked in water for about 15 minutes  
2 C (500 ml) water  
salt, to taste

### FOR TADKA

2½ Tbsp (37.5 ml) coconut oil  
2½ tsp (12.5 ml) black mustard seeds 1 tsp (5 ml) cumin seeds  
4 fresh curry leaves  
6 dried red chillies, broken into halves

1. To make the spicy dahl, heat the coconut oil in medium-size saucepan on high heat and immediately add the onion slices and chilli and fry for about 8 minutes, or until slightly golden.
2. Add the chopped tomato, garlic and ginger paste, chilli powder, turmeric and cumin and cook for about 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium. Simmer the ingredients for about 5 minutes, or until it forms a lovely luscious sauce.
3. Drain the lentils and add them to the cooked curry sauce, along with 1 C (250 ml) of the water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes.
4. Add the last cup of water and cook on medium-high heat for about 5 minutes. Thereafter, reduce the heat to low and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the dhal has transformed to an almost porridge-like consistency. Taste and season if needed. Remove from the heat.
5. For the tadka, heat the oil in a small pan. Add the mustard seeds and cook until they start to pop, then add the cumin seeds. Add the curry leaves and dried chilli pieces. Stir until sizzling and fragrant – about 5 seconds – and immediately pour the spice-infused oil over the dhal. Stir the tadka into the dhal.
6. This particular thali is an ensemble of dahl and aromatic cumin-spiced rice (page 83), along with cauliflower spiced curry (page 111) and Indian-style peas and potatoes (page 48).

### DID YOU KNOW?

In English, tadka is known as ‘tempering. It is a cooking technique in which whole or ground spices are roasted in oil or ghee (clarified butter) in order to release their essential oils, thus making their flavour more aromatic. This cooking technique is popular across Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. I was taught how to prepare a tadka in India, where my friend Ananth’s wife, Radhika, would prepare a tadka with ghee, curry leaves, cumin, coriander and mustard seeds, and green chilli. I love adding tadka to my dhal just before serving because it enhances the flavour of the porridge-like dahl.