

Cooking with Amanda - Winter Comfort Meals

Lentil Shepherds Pie

This shepherd's pie is topped with mashed root vegetables, instead of the traditional mashed potatoes. The stew in this recipe can be made ahead of time, even frozen and defrosted before use. Herbes de Provence is a blend of dried herbs including basil, lavender, rosemary, and thyme, often sold in small clay crocks. You'll need a total of 1 pound of lentils for this dish; experiment with your own mix or use the proportions suggested in the ingredient list. Serve Shepherd's Pie with broccoli, sautéed kale or other seasonal vegetables. Serves 6

Lentil Filling

- 2½ medium onions (about 1 pound), diced fine
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 4 teaspoons Herbes de Provence (or use rosemary and thyme)
- 2 teaspoons dried basil
- 1½ teaspoons curry powder
- 2 bay leaves
- ¾ cup yellow split peas, picked over and rinsed
- ¾ cup green lentils, picked over and rinsed
- ¾ cup French lentils, picked over and rinsed
- 1 (28-ounce) can tomato puree
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 3 medium carrots, diced
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1½ teaspoons vegetable bouillon powder
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ cups green peas, or 1 (10-ounce) package frozen peas, thawed
- 1 tablespoon potato starch dissolved in 1 tablespoon water

Mashed Root Vegetables

- 1 ½ pounds Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and diced medium
- ½ pound parsnip, peeled and diced medium
- ½ pound celery root, peeled and diced medium
- ½ pound rutabaga, peeled and diced medium
- Pinch of salt
- 1 cup soy creamer (or plant-based milk)
- 3 tablespoons nonhydrogenated margarine
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper

For the filling, heat a little water in a large stockpot or Dutch oven over medium heat, add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion turns translucent, about 10 minutes. Add the Herbes de Provence, basil, curry powder and bay leaves and sauté until fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the split peas, lentils, tomato puree and vegetable broth; cover and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the diced carrots, vinegar, bouillon powder and salt and simmer uncovered, until the lentils, peas and carrots are tender, about 15 minutes. Turn off the heat. Add the green peas and the dissolved potato starch, stir, and remove from the heat. Pour the mixture into a 9 by 13-inch baking dish and let cool. (At this point you may wrap the dish and refrigerate or freeze until needed.)

Preheat the oven to 350°F while you prepare the mashed root vegetables. Bring 8 cups of water to a boil in a large pot. Add the rutabaga and cook for 5 minutes. Add the potatoes, parsnip, and celery root and cook until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. While the vegetables are cooking, heat the soy creamer and margarine in a small saucepan over medium-low heat (or in the microwave). Drain the vegetables, return them to the pot and mash them, adding the warm liquid as you mash. Add salt and white pepper to taste.

Spread the mashed root vegetables evenly over the lentil mixture. Bake until light golden brown on the top, 20 to 25 minutes, and serve.