

## Springtime Lentil Salad

In hindsight, this salad looks like the offspring that might result from a debauchorous night involving the lentil salad and the raw asparagus salad in *A Boat, a Whale and a Walrus*, but it wasn't intended to mimic either. It's a result of two things: first, the need for a lighter meal before a bike ride, and second, the green riches springing forth from my garden in the forms of parsley, chives, and mint. Serve it as is, with a few things alongside, or pile it onto steamed brown rice, like we did, for more of a complete meal.

I used the nettle pesto I make every spring, but basil pesto (even a good jarred version) will work nicely.

Serves 4 with rice, or 6 to 8 as a salad.

4 cups water  
1 cup small black lentils or beluga lentils, rinsed and picked over  
Kosher salt, to taste  
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice  
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar (raw, unpasteurized preferred)  
8 tablespoons good extra-virgin olive oil, divided, plus more for drizzling  
1/2 pound skinny asparagus (about half a bunch), ends trimmed, cut into 2-inch sections  
1 cup fresh shelled English peas  
1/4 cup roughly chopped mint leaves  
1/4 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives  
1/2 cup pesto (made with any combination of herbs and nuts that appeals to you)  
Crunchy sea salt

In a large saucepan, heat the water to a boil. Add the lentils and cook at a simmer, stirring occasionally, for about 30 minutes, or until tender.

While the lentils cook, in a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, apple cider vinegar, and 7 tablespoons olive oil to blend, adding salt as necessary. (Keep in mind that lentils like a lot of salt.) Set the dressing aside.

Heat a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the remaining tablespoon olive oil, swirl to coat the pan, then add the asparagus and peas. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the vegetables are bright green and slightly charred in spots. Transfer the greens to a big platter to cool.

When the lentils are cooked, drain them in a fine-mesh strainer, then transfer them back to the warm pot. Add the dressing, stir gently to combine, then stir in the mint, parsley, and chives, reserving a few pinches of each for the top of the salad, if desired. Add the asparagus and peas to the lentil combination, stir a few times, then heap the salad back onto the big platter.

Serve the salad warm or at room temperature, drizzled with additional olive oil and garnished with extra herbs and crunchy sea salt.