GREEK LENTIL SALAD

Adapted from *Vegan 101* by Jenny Engel and Heather Bell

2 cups lentils (or a whole bag)*
1 bay leaf (optional)
1 cup chopped fresh tomatoes
2/3 cup Kalamata (Greek) olives, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 cup scallions. sliced, or mild onions (e.g. Vidalia), finely chopped
2 Persian or mini-cucumbers, diced
Chopped fresh parsley (optional)
Chopped fresh mint (optional—if you have it!)
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts (add just before serving)

Dressing:

2 to 4 tbsp fresh lemon juice (1/2 to 1 lemon, juiced)
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
1/2 tsp oregano
1/2 tsp thyme
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper

Place lentils in a pot with at least 4 cups of water and a bay leaf (if using), bring to a boil, and simmer about 45 minutes until lentils are done but still hold their shape. Check periodically to make sure the lentils have enough water and to make sure they don't overcook. Put the cooked lentils in a large bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and the dressing, toss together, and refrigerate until ready to serve. Add the pine nuts just before serving. This keeps the pine nuts from getting soggy; however, leftovers of this salad will be just fine!

This recipe makes a pretty big batch and can be cut in half.

*Regular lentils work fine for this dish, but if you can, use Goya brand Pardina lentils (found in your grocery with the dried beans or sometimes with the Mexican/Latin foods). Pardina lentils are slightly smaller than regular, and stay somewhat firmer after cooking. Beluga black lentils and French green lentils have a similar advantage of staying firm after cooking. But regular brown lentils will work fine as well in this recipe; just be sure not to overcook them.

If you wonder about the difference between "chopped" and "diced": the techniques are pretty similar, but with "diced" your goal is uniform pieces of the food that will keep their shape, so the term is often used with vegetables like potatoes, peppers, and cucumbers.






