Main dishes / India

Dal Makhani

Whole black lentils and kidney beans slow-simmered overnight in tomatoes, butter, and cream — the dal that defines north Indian comfort, rich and midnight-dark.

Time 840 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 3 parts Whole black urad dal
- ☐ 1 parts Dried red kidney beans
- ☐ 1 parts White onion, finely diced
- ☐ 0.3 parts Garlic cloves, minced
- ☐ 0.2 parts Fresh ginger, grated
- ☐ 2 parts Tomato passata
- ☐ 0.5 parts Unsalted butter
- ☐ 0.5 parts Heavy cream
- ☐ 0.05 parts Cumin seeds
- ☐ 0.05 parts Garam masala
- ☐ 0.05 parts Kashmiri chili powder
- ☐ 0.02 parts Kasuri methi (dried fenugreek leaves)
- ☐ 0.08 parts Salt

Let's make it.

01 Rinse the black urad dal and kidney beans under cold water until the water runs clear. Combine in a large bowl, cover with cold water by at least 5 cm, and soak for a minimum of 8 hours or overnight. The dal will swell to nearly double its volume. Drain and discard the soaking water before cooking.

02 Transfer the drained dal and beans to a heavy pot or pressure cooker. Cover with fresh cold water by 5 cm. If using a pressure cooker, cook on high pressure for 25–30 minutes. If simmering open on the stovetop, bring to a rolling boil, skim any grey foam, then reduce to a gentle simmer. Cook 60–90 minutes, adding hot water to keep the dal submerged. The dal and beans must be completely, utterly soft before you combine them with the masala — an underdone dal will never finish cooking properly in the sauce. Reserve the cooking liquid.

03 In a separate heavy-bottomed pot or karahi, melt half the butter over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and wait 30 seconds until they sputter and darken. Add the onion and cook, stirring frequently, for 12–15 minutes until deep golden-brown — not blond, not pale. Add garlic and ginger; cook 2 minutes until the raw smell disappears. Add Kashmiri chili powder, garam masala, and salt; stir for 30 seconds until fragrant. Pour in the tomato passata and cook, stirring often and scraping the bottom, for 15–20 minutes. This is the bhuna: the masala must be roasted in the pan until the fat separates and pools at the edges, the tomato turns deep brick-red, and there is no raw tomato smell left. Do not rush.

04 Add the cooked dal and beans to the bhuna masala, along with enough of the reserved cooking liquid to make a thick but pourable consistency. Stir everything together and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook uncovered on the absolute lowest heat — a diffuser helps — for at least 2 hours, stirring every 20 minutes. Four to six hours is better. The dal will deepen from brown to almost black and the flavors will unify. With 15 minutes left, stir in the heavy cream and the remaining butter. Rub the kasuri methi vigorously between your palms to release its oils before crumbling it in. Taste and correct salt. Serve with butter naan or steamed basmati.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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