

Baseera Khan • Red October Daal

This was the meat and potatoes of my family growing up. We pooled money and resources together and performed mutual aid before mutual aid was a thing non-profit arts organizations started talking about in their mission statements — ha ha ha. Red and yellow daal gave me a sense of comfort and continues to do so, and I am very proud of myself for making it and making it well. My dad used to say this is the food for a true Marxist.



Laura Kina, Baseera Khan's Red October Daal, 2021, watercolor, pen, and colored pencil on paper, 9" x 12".

Red October Daal Recipe

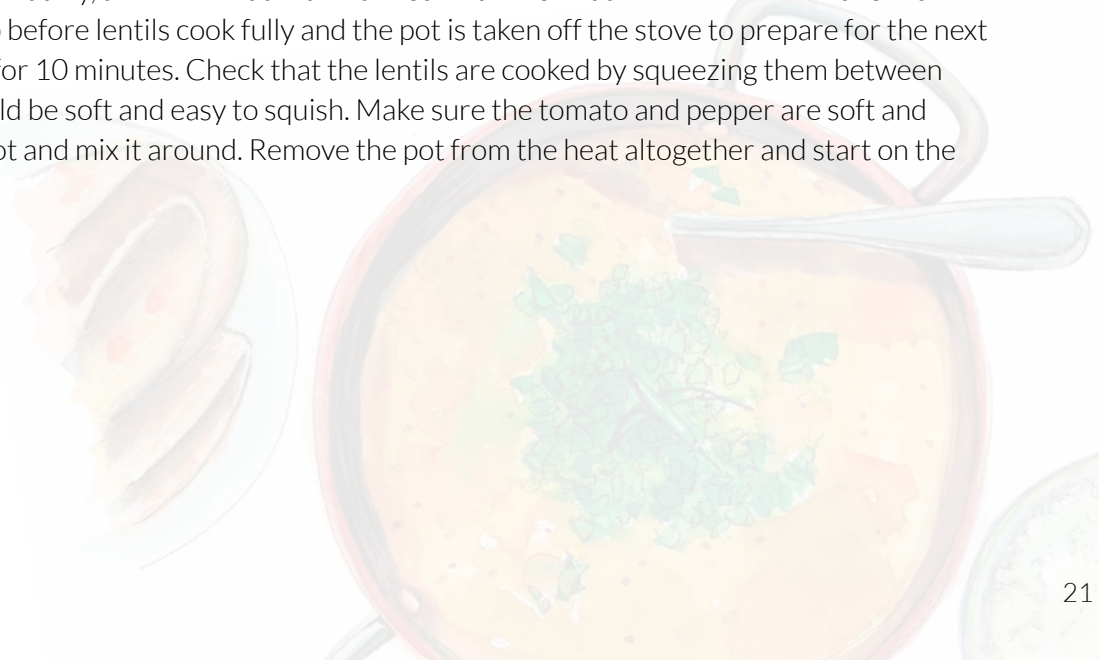
Ingredients:

- 1 cup split red lentils or masoor daal (wash with room temperature water) (cooks fast! basically the minute you start washing it, it starts to get soft)
- 1 teaspoon whole cumin seeds
- 2 tomatoes roughly chopped
- 1 teaspoon of salt masala
- 1 tablespoon ghee or vegetable oil
- 1 large bay leaf
- 1 small onion chopped
- 2 garlic cloves chopped
- 1 teaspoon grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon grated turmeric (or use dried turmeric)
- 1 green Thai chili whole
- 1 teaspoon fenugreek leaves (or seeds) finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 or 2 jalapeno peppers sliced
- 1 teaspoon black mustard
- 1 teaspoon fennel seed
- 1/2 a carrot, thinly sliced

Garnish and serve with a handful of freshly chopped coriander and a sprinkle of garam masala powder as the dish comes off the stove and is about to be served. Add Thai chili on top of plated Daal.

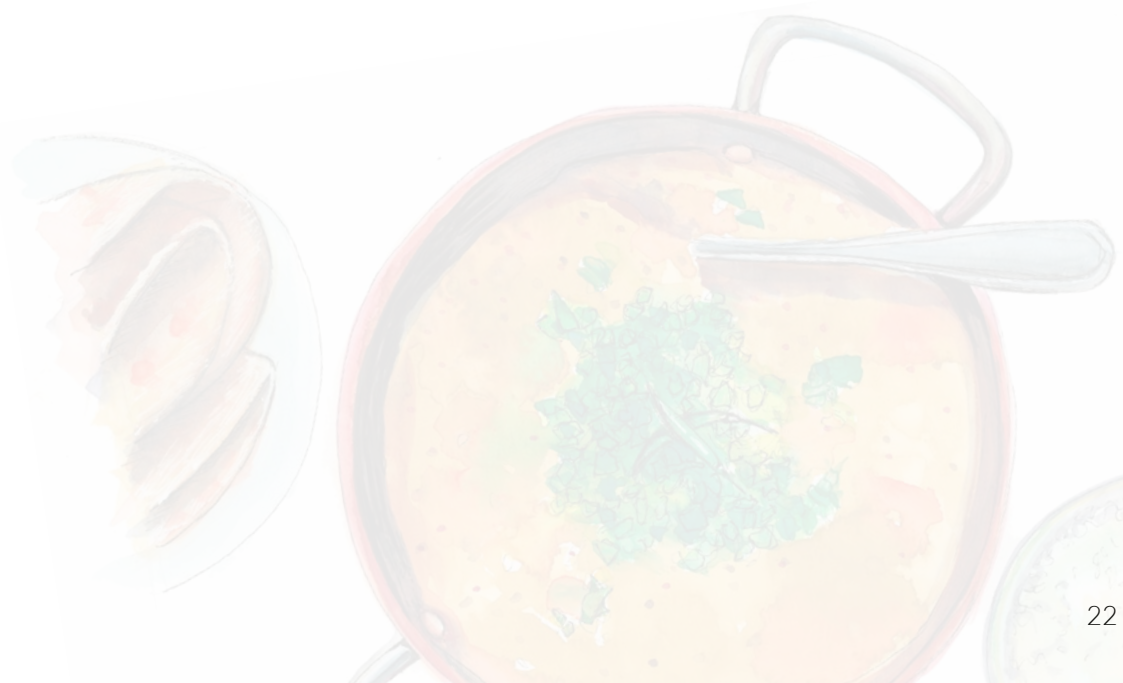
Directions:

1. The first step is to clean the daal, it has extra starch on it, and may have bugs in it from its packaging. After washing the daal set it aside.
2. Get out a tall pot and add enough water in it to properly submerge the daal with around half an inch of water above it – like 4 parts water to 1 part lentil.
3. Start to heat the water and dump the clean lentils into the pot of water. Before the pot boils with the lentils also add a roughly chopped large tomato and 1 sliced green jalapeno, thinly sliced carrot. Put in a half teaspoon of salt. Have the water come to a boil, don't worry about the froth that appears yet. Make sure that the pot is still watery, add more water to make sure it does not all cook off. The froth should be skimmed off the top before lentils cook fully and the pot is taken off the stove to prepare for the next step. Leave to simmer for 10 minutes. Check that the lentils are cooked by squeezing them between your fingers, they should be soft and easy to squish. Make sure the tomato and pepper are soft and squish them into the pot and mix it around. Remove the pot from the heat altogether and start on the spice and curry pan.



Red October Daal Recipe (continued)

4. In a separate frying pan heat up ghee, if you don't have ghee you can use, mustard oil, or high heat olive oil. Add a whole green Thai chili – make sure you puncture it first with a knife so it doesn't explode in the pan when it is heated up. Add the pepper and a large bay leaf to the pan. If you have curry leaves you can use that too, but it is sometimes hard to find. Now add the seeds one at a time. Make sure you smell the aroma between each added spice or herb. Add the cumin seeds, mustard seeds, and fennel seeds. When the seeds sizzle, remove the chili and set it aside for your garnish at the end.
5. Now as the seeds start to give off aroma, add the onion, wait until it is golden, then add garlic and ginger. Add turmeric if it is fresh (if it is powder it can be added after heat is reduced). Reduce the heat and then add tomatoes, turmeric (if powder) if you add too much turmeric it will taste chalky, fenugreek seeds, and more chopped Thai chili to taste. Gently let the ingredients cook down for about 10 minutes to make a thick masala paste. Tomatoes must get cooked down, add water if need be, to help break down tomatoes.
6. Now add a ladle or two full of the lentils we set aside to the masala paste in the frying pan and stir together. Make sure this stirring gets all the ingredients mixed well together. Then empty all the contents back into the pan with the lentils and stir. It should have the consistency of a thick soup but if it's too thick just add a little boiling water. Apply the pot to the heat and let it cook for a few additional minutes, if you prefer it thicker just leave it on the heat to reduce until you get the consistency you want. Check the seasoning and add a little salt if required. Stir in the garam masala, fresh-cut coriander. Top with the whole chilies to serve.
7. You can dish this up now. Top it off with the fried chilies you set aside.



Baseera Khan



Photo credit: Jose Alejandro Espallat

Baseera Khan was born in Denton, Texas and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Upcoming solo exhibitions include: Public Art Fund, New York, NY; (2023); Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta, GA (2023); and Moody Center For The Arts, Rice University, Houston, Texas, and Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio (2022). Selected solo and two-person exhibitions include: Brooklyn Museum, New York (2021); The Kitchen, New York (2020); Simone Subal Gallery, New York (2019); Jenkins Johnson, New York (2019); Participant Inc. Gallery, New York (2017). Selected group exhibitions include: Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2021); NOMA, New Orleans, LA (2020); Gracie Mansion Conservancy, New York, NY (2020); Munich Documentation Centre for the History of National Socialism, Germany (2019); BRIC, New York (2019); Albany Museum, Albany, (2019); Simone Subal Gallery, New York, (2018); MoCA Tucson, Arizona (2018); Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, New York (2018); The Kitchen, New York (2018); Sculpture Center, New York (2018); Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado (2018); Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2017); Queens Museum, New York (2016); Socrates Sculpture Park, New York (2016); and Abrons Art Center, New York (2016).

baseerakhanstudios.com



Baseera Khan, *Blue White and Red (portals)*, 2020, leather, leather, c-print, grommets
35 x 21.75 inches. Image courtesy of the artist and Simone Subal Gallery, New York.
Photo: Dario Lasagni.

This work is a banner, a seal, portal, flag, a garment — I don't know yet. After a feverish dream in May 2020, I knew how to achieve this new series: a flowing system of layers grommited together to conceal and reveal different elements at different times. The cutout pleather patterns obscure intimate moments of photographic love. Akin to an older series of mine called the *Acoustic Sound Blankets*, this new body of work stems from radical-ornamentation histories.