



**GET TOGETHERS**  
Bringing people together through food

# Carrot, Lentil and Spinach Ragu, served with spaghetti

This is a meat-free version of a traditional Italian ragu – perfect for serving with spaghetti or using in lasagne and other pasta dishes.

**Organisation and skill:** ★★

**Cost:** £££

**Portion-wise:** Makes 4 adult servings

**Store-wise :** Cool, cover and keep the sauce in the fridge for up to 3 days.

Can be frozen for up to 3 months. Defrost in the fridge before use.

**Allergy aware**  
This recipe contains:  
Cereals containing gluten (spaghetti)  
Celery (also possibly in stock cube)  
Fish (Worcestershire sauce)  
Milk (cheese)

## Equipment

- Chopping board
- Sharp knife
- Grater
- Measuring jug
- Large pan x2
- Long-handled spoon – wooden or metal
- Colander

## Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion – finely chopped
- 2 carrots – finely chopped or coarsely grated
- 1 celery stick – finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves – crushed
- 250g dried red lentils
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 vegetable stock cube, made up with 500ml boiling water
- few drops Worcestershire sauce
- or balsamic vinegar (optional)
- black pepper and salt to season
- 100g baby leaf spinach
- 300g spaghetti
- parmesan or vegetarian hard cheese – grated, to serve (optional)

## How to make it

- 1 Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion, carrot, celery and garlic. Cook gently for 15–20 mins until everything is softened but not brown.
- 2 Stir in the lentils, chopped tomatoes, tomato purée, herbs and stock. Bring to a simmer, then cook for 40–50 mins until the lentils are tender and the sauce has thickened. If it looks too dry, add in a few spoons of water.
- 3 Taste and season the sauce with the Worcestershire sauce / balsamic vinegar if using and lots of black pepper. Add salt more cautiously and only if needed.
- 4 Keep the ragu on a low heat while you cook the spaghetti, following the instructions on the packet (usually 9–11 minutes). add the baby leaf spinach to the ragu sauce about 5 minutes before the spaghetti is ready, allow it to wilt and then mix through.
- 5 Drain the spaghetti well and divide between pasta bowls or plates. Spoon sauce onto the pasta and grate over some cheese.

**Serving suggestions:** Serve this as a sauce for pasta or as a topping for jacket potatoes. A sprinkling of cheese and a crunchy salad completes the meal.

## Eat well

### General nutrition

- This recipe is a good source of vegetable protein, vitamin A, iron and fibre. The iron from lentils is more easily absorbed when a source of vitamin C is included as part of the meal, so stirring some tender spinach leaves into the ragu just before serving will help with this.
- The carrots in this recipe provide beta-carotene which our body converts to Vitamin A. Vitamin A used to be called the anti-infection vitamin, because of its link to enhancing our immune system which helps us fight infections such as colds. It is also linked to growth and good vision in dim light.
- Spinach is an excellent source of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C and folate as well as being a good source of manganese, magnesium, iron and vitamin B2. Vitamin K is important for maintaining bone.

### Special dietary needs

- All the nutrients in this recipe make it ideal for young children. Children under 5 have a relatively high requirement for vitamin A and evidence from research has shown that more than half of under 5s have less than recommended. About a third of a carrot provides all the vitamin A a child needs.

### Good nutrition across the generations

- This vegetable-based meal is particularly useful for a gathering of people with diverse dietary requirements e.g. it is suitable for vegans (omit the cheese or use vegan equivalent) or vegetarians or serve with rice not pasta for gluten free.
- Due to the consistency of the ragu, it is also useful for anyone who may require a modified texture diet e.g. older people who may have difficulty chewing.

## Shopping

- This is cheap to make and can be adapted for use in different recipes, for example:
  - thin it down with extra stock, blend it and serve as a soup.
  - switch the herbs and tomato puree for spices like turmeric, cumin and coriander to make a dhal-type sauce that can be served with rice.
- Many of the ingredients are good store-cupboard buys, e.g. lentils, canned tomatoes, tomato puree, dried herbs, spaghetti. Buy them when they are on offer for even better value.

## Cooking together

- This sauce works brilliantly for batch cooking and for feeding large groups. Scale it up according to how big a cooking pan you have! Take care when seasoning large batches of food, especially with salt – a good tip is to add a little and then taste and add more if needed.
- Working as a team will make the preparation much quicker. The vegetables need to be chopped into small pieces so maybe not a job for very young children or people with fine motor-skill difficulties.

## Sustainability – good for you, good for the planet

- As an alternative to traditional bolognese sauce, this helps you reduce the amount of meat in your diet for a climate-friendly approach.
- Use up the last of the veg in your vegetable rack or fridge to reduce food waste – additions of a few mushrooms, an odd courgette or pepper will all work well.
- Beetroot leaves can be used in place of spinach.
- Organic carrots are a good choice for this recipe – they are priced competitively to non-organic, don't have to be peeled and are widely available in supermarkets.