

LUKAS VOLGER

Lentils, Carrots, + Dates with Dill

A carrot that's ripe, sweet, and juicy will really shine in this salad—supporting the sticky caramel notes of the dates and providing contrast, both texture- and flavor-wise, to the earthiness of the lentils. The dill is a bit of a wild card, and if you're dill averse, you can substitute tender parsley leaves, or skip the herbs altogether, but I find that the synergy of the carrots and dates, plus that of the lemon (in the vinaigrette) and dill, work in a brilliant way. For salads like this, small, firm lentils, such as French du Puy or black Beluga, work best because they hold their shape so well. If flat green or brown lentils are what you've got, just make sure to be attentive as you cook them, removing them from the heat right when they're tender, because they can be easier to overcook.

This recipe appears in my book [Snacks for Dinner: Small Bites, Full Plates, Can't Lose](#).

Serves 4

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup small, dark green or black lentils, such as du Puy or Beluga

Kosher salt

1 clove garlic

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon honey

Big pinch dried chili flakes

3 tablespoons olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper

1 large carrot (about 8 ounces), or 2 to 4 smaller ones

5 large dates, pitted and diced

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dill fronds

Rinse the lentils and comb through them for stones. Place in a saucepan and add enough water to cover by about an inch. Bring to a simmer, add $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, then reduce the heat to maintain a very gentle simmer and partially cover the pan. Cook until the lentils are pleasingly tender—start tasting after 15 minutes, though they may take up to 25 minutes. If the lentils rise above the water surface, simply add a bit of hot tap water to keep them submerged. Once tender, strain off any excess liquid.

Meanwhile, to prepare the vinaigrette, mince the garlic, sprinkle it with a pinch of salt, then continue mincing and flattening it out on your cutting board using the flat side of your chef's knife until you have garlic paste. Combine this with the vinegar, lemon juice, honey, chili flakes, oil, and a few grinds of black pepper in a small jar and shake until emulsified. (Alternatively, whisk together the garlic paste with the vinegar, lemon juice, honey, chili flakes, and pepper, then whisk in the oil in a steady stream.) Pour the vinaigrette over the warm lentils and allow to marinate and cool for at least 10 to 15 minutes.

Using the large-hole side of a box grater (or a [julienne peeler](#), which I discovered via the fun cookbook [Salad Freak](#)), grate your carrot, angling it on a bias in order to get longer, feathery shreds. You should have about 2 cups.

Combine the carrots and dates with the lentils in a mixing bowl. Fold in the dill just before serving. Taste, adding additional salt and/or lemon as needed.