

Sicilian Lentil, Vegetable, and Pasta Soup

Michele Scicolone (December 29, 2016)



Every country has its favorite customs to celebrate the New Year, including Italy. In some places, old clothes, cracked dishes and even broken furniture are tossed out the window at the stroke of twelve to symbolize clearing out the old year and making way for the new. Anyone in Naples or Rome on New Year's Eve should keep their eyes open to avoid bits of flying crockery or old socks.

Throughout the country, there are parties, dances and concerts galore. Many Italians wear red underwear under their party attire to ensure good luck in the new year. At midnight, fireworks sparkle in the night sky. Naturally there are traditional foods eaten to celebrate. Lentils, beans and grapes, because they resemble coins, symbolize prosperity and abundance. The lentils or beans are eaten on New Year's Day with cotechino, a large sausage wrapped in a pig's skin, or zampone, a similar sausage stuffed in a pig's foot. You can find them at many Italian markets in this country.



To start the New Year off, I always make Sicilian Lentil Soup from my book *The Italian Slow Cooker*. The slow cooker saves time and effort and the recipe is simply a matter of combining a few ingredients and leaving them to simmer until tender and flavorful while I enjoy the day with family and friends.

In a large slow cooker, combine the lentils, vegetables, and water. Cover and cook on low for 7 hours. Add the pasta and salt and pepper to taste. Cook on high 30 minutes more or until the pasta is tender. Serve hot sprinkled with the cheese. Potatoes, green beans, winter squash and many other vegetables can be added to this easy soup.

SERVES 6 TO 8

- 1 POUND BROWN LENTILS, RINSED AND PICKED OVER
- 1 LARGE ONION, CHOPPED
- 2 MEDIUM CARROTS, CHOPPED
- 1 LARGE CELERY RIB, WITH LEAVES, CHOPPED
- 2 LARGE TOMATOES, PEELED AND CHOPPED OR 1 CUP CANNED ITALIAN PEELED TOMATOES, CHOPPED
- 2 MEDIUM ZUCCHINI, YELLOW SQUASH OR PATTYPAN, CHOPPED
- 6 CUPS WATER
- 1 CUP TUBETTI OR OTHER SMALL PASTA SHAPE
- SALT AND FRESHLY GROUND PEPPER TO TASTE
- FRESHLY GRATED PECORINO ROMANO

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