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*Recipes excerpted from **5 Spices, 50 Dishes, Simple Indian Recipes Using Five Common Spices** by Ruta Kahate. Photography by Susie Cushner. Copyright 2007. Published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, CA. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.*

Everyday Yellow Dal

This simple dal goes with practically any Indian menu. It can be part of an elaborate meal, or simply ladled over freshly steamed rice with a little store-bought Indian pickle or chutney on the side. If you'd like to dress it up a bit, sprinkle a handful of Burnt Onions on top just before serving.

1 cup yellow split peas, soaked in cold water for 1 hour
3 cups water
1 large tomato (about 8 ounces), cut into 8 wedges
1/4 cup canola oil
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 medium red onion, finely chopped (about 1-1/2 cups)
5 large cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon coriander seeds, finely ground
3/4 teaspoon ground turmeric
1/2 teaspoon cayenne
1/4 cup minced cilantro leaves
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 teaspoon salt

Drain the dal (split peas) and place in a large saucepan. Add the fresh water and tomato and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover and cook until the peas are tender, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Pick out any tomato skins and whisk the dal to emulsify it. Keep warm over low heat.

Make the *tadka*: Heat the oil in a medium skillet over high heat. When the oil begins to smoke, add the cumin seeds, covering the pan with a lid or spatter screen. After the seeds have stopped sputtering, add the onion and garlic and sauté over medium heat until most of the onion has turned dark brown, about 5 minutes. Add the coriander, turmeric, and cayenne, stir, and pour the onion mixture over the dal. Add the cilantro, butter, and salt to the dal and simmer for another 5 minutes. Serve hot.

Serves 4.