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Lentil & Sausage Soup

Serves 6-8

Our remake of this hearty soup has all the flavor with less calories. It's a version that's packed with vegetables along with plenty of protein-packed lentils. You'll find just a hint of heat thanks to the inclusion of crushed red pepper flakes. This soup is filled with complex flavors, but all with minimal effort. Simply cook the sausage before adding all ingredients to a crockpot. Then, let the sausage and lentils simmer together into a winning flavor combination!

Ingredients:

8 oz sweet Italian sausage
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, diced
1 carrot, sliced
2 stalks celery, diced
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, coarsely chopped
3 sprigs fresh thyme
1 bay leaf
1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
4-6 cups chicken broth
1-1/2 cups brown lentils, rinsed
2 cups of kale, stemmed, roughly chopped

Directions:

1. Cook the sausage and garlic in a skillet on the stovetop, until the sausage is browned and thoroughly cooked.
2. Meanwhile, prepare the vegetables for the soup by slicing and dicing.
3. Place the cooked sausage, vegetables, broth, herbs, and lentils into a large crockpot, and cook on low for 4 hours, or high for 2 hours.
4. Before serving, add a few handfuls of kale, and continue cooking the soup until the kale becomes tender and wilted.
5. Remove the sprigs of thyme and the bay leaf. Taste and adjust the seasonings with salt and pepper, as needed.
6. Serve hot with a garnish of fresh parsley and a side of crusty, warm bread.