

Red Velvet Soup

*Recipe From
What to Eat for How You Feel:
The New Ayurvedic Kitchen,
by Divya Alter (Rizzoli, 2017)*

SERVES 4
SOAK: 30 MINUTES
PREP: 5 MINUTES
COOK: 30 MINUTE

Gluten free; Dairy free

If you've been on the Airy side for a long time, you may not only have the typical cold hands and feet, but you may occasionally feel drained and even be anemic. Stressful schedules and cold weather can do that to us, so I created this protein- and iron-rich soup to boost our strength and add a little extra redness to our cheeks. It is also suitable to include in your diet when recovering from surgery, illness, or childbirth.

Ayurveda recommends eating red lentils regularly because they are highly nutritious yet easy to digest. Although, ancient Ayurvedic texts describe these bright orange legumes as a balance for Fiery or Earthy imbalances, they can also cause constipation if you're feeling Airy. The beets, fats, and spices in Red

Velvet Soup make red lentils a balancing force for Airy digestion.

As a Vedic science, Ayurveda is closely connected to Vedic Astrology. The ancient texts describe how every food and herb links to a planet and can be used to remedy negative planetary influence in a patient's chart. For example, eating lentils and pungent spices can help strengthen Mars in your chart. A well-placed Mars gives good physical and sexual vitality, athletic ability, work capacity, and resistance to disease.

With its bold color and potent yet gentle seasoning, Red Protein Soup makes quite a statement. It will warm you up and brighten your table on a cold and gloomy day.

INGREDIENTS

2 teaspoons coriander seeds

1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds

1 cup red lentils, washed, soaked for 30 minutes, drained, and rinsed

2 medium red beets, peeled and cut into 1-inch cubes (about 2 1/2 cups)

1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 large or 2 small bay leaves or cassia leaves

1 small green Thai chile, seeded and minced

1 tablespoon ghee or olive oil

2 teaspoons salt

1 tablespoon olive oil

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh cilantro leaves

4 lime slices

FOR FIERY DIGESTION:

Reduce the turmeric to 1/4 teaspoon, substitute 6 curry leaves for the bay leaves, omit the chile and black pepper, and garnish with extra cilantro.

FOR EARTHY DIGESTION:

Reduce the ghee and olive oil to 1 teaspoon each; add 1/4 teaspoon asafoetida and one more green Thai chile with the other spices in Step 2.

Grind the coriander and cumin seeds to a fine powder in a spice grinder.

Combine the red lentils and 4 cups water in a heavy 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a full boil over high heat, stirring occasionally. Remove any froth from the surface (this will reduce the gassiness of the lentils). Add the ground coriander and cumin, the beets, turmeric, bay leaves, chile, and ghee and mix well. Bring to a boil again, then reduce the heat to medium-low, cover with a tight-fitting lid, and simmer until the lentils and beets are soft and cooked through, about 20 minutes.

Turn off the heat and leave the pot uncovered to allow the soup to cool down a bit. Remove the bay leaves and add the salt, olive oil, and black pepper. Blend the soup to a more chunky or smooth consistency; you may also add more water if you like—in this case, adjust the salt to taste.

Garnish with the cilantro and serve hot with lime slices. The lime enhances the taste and helps with protein digestion and iron absorption.

