French Lentil Salad with Walnuts and Goat Cheese

Makes 6 Servings

David Lebovitz, My Paris Kitchen. This will serve more than 6 people as a side dish.



1 1/2 cups (405g) French green lentils (preferably lentils du Puysee note following recipe)
1 bay leaf
6 sprigs of thyme
1 small carrot, peeled and finely diced
1 small red onion, peeled and finely diced
1 rib celery, finely diced
freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
1 cup walnuts or pecans, toasted and coarsely chopped
1 cup crumbled goat cheese
DRESSING:
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/3 cup good quality olive oil
1 small shallot, peeled and minced

1. Rinse the lentils and place them in a saucepan with plenty of lightly salted water, the bay leaves, and the thyme. Bring to a boil, then decrease heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes. Add the finely diced vegetables and cook for another 5 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Do not overcook the lentils: They should be tender, but not at all falling apart.
2. While the lentils are cooking, mix the vinegar, salt, dijon mustard, olive oil, and shallots to make the dressing.
3. When the lentils are done, drain them and discard bay leaves and thyme sprigs. In a large bowl, mix the still-warm lentils with the dressing. Taste for seasoning.
4. Let the lentils cool to room temperature. Then mix in a few grinds of pepper plus the parsley, nuts, and cheese. This salad keeps for at least 2 days. If serving more than once, hold some of the nuts and cheese and add on top each time it's served. Taste for seasonings again before serving - it might need more salt.