

## Lentil and Vegetable Stew

Serves 6

*This stew saves beautifully, but will thicken as it sits in your fridge. Simply add a little more water or broth to the stew when you are ready to enjoy it.*

2 small carrots, peeled and sliced  
1 celery rib, sliced  
1 small yellow onion, chopped  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes (I like to use fire-roasted tomatoes)  
1 ½ cups lentils, picked over and rinsed  
½ cup basmati brown rice (optional)  
6 cups water, vegetable, or less-sodium chicken stock  
1 dried bay leaf  
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste  
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, more to taste  
2-3 teaspoons balsamic vinegar  
**Garnish:** fresh minced parsley or cilantro

Heat the olive oil in a large Dutch oven. Add the carrots, celery, and onion and cook until just soft, about 5 minutes. Stir in the minced garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the diced tomatoes, lentils, brown rice (if using), and the bay leaf. Stir to combine. Add the water, 1 teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon black pepper and bring the stew to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and let simmer for 50 minutes. If the stew thickens too much, add a little more water or broth.

Stir in the balsamic vinegar and season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper if needed. Serve garnished with minced parsley or cilantro.