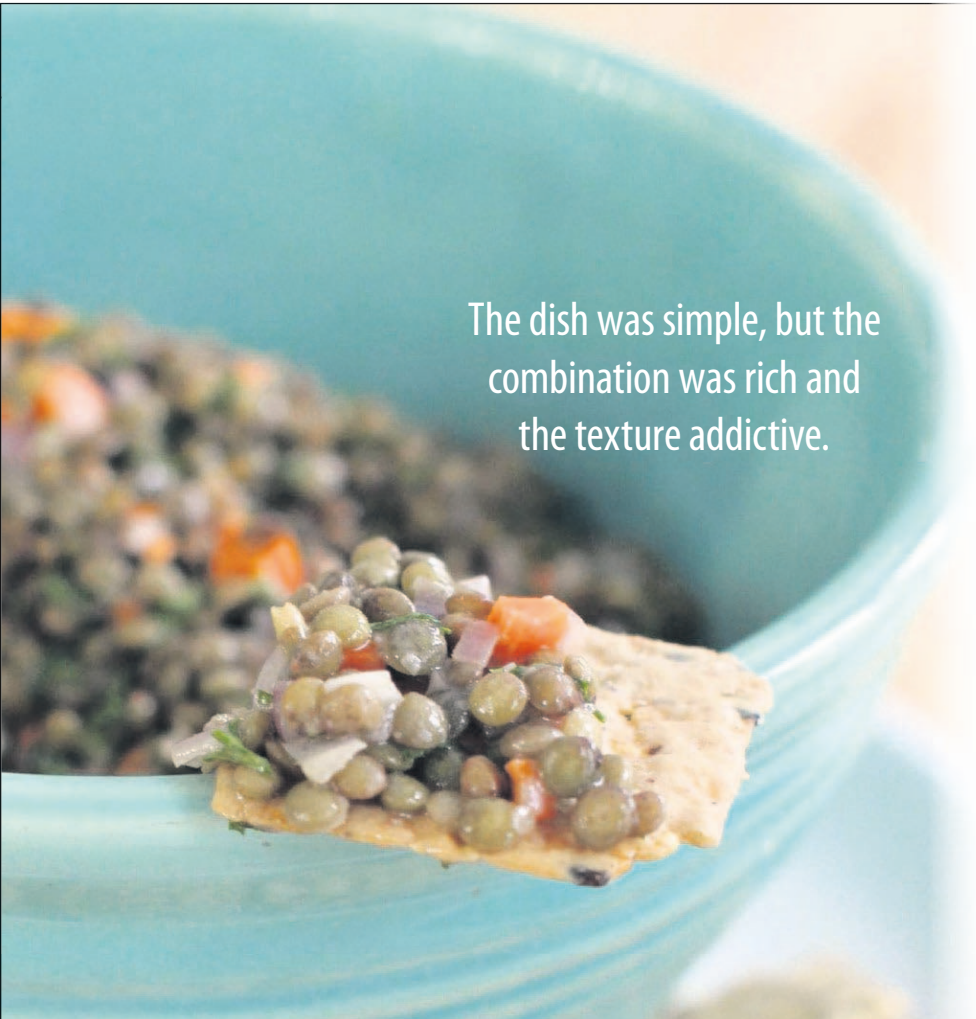




The dish was simple, but the combination was rich and the texture addictive.

French Lentil Salad

Start to finish: 25 minutes

Servings: 4

1 cup dried small green lentils (French lentils or lentilles de Puy)

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 small carrot, finely chopped

2 medium shallots, chopped

2 tablespoons chopped fresh curly parsley

Directions:

1. Place the lentils in a mesh strainer and rinse with cool water. Discard any gravel or other debris.

2. Place the lentils in a 4-quart saucepan, then add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Set over medium-high heat and bring to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low, then simmer until the lentils are just tender but not falling apart, about 15 minutes. When lentils are done, drain them, then return them to the saucepan and cover. Set aside.

3. In a small bowl, whisk together the mustard, vinegar and a pinch each of salt and pepper. While continuing to whisk, drizzle in the oil and whisk until fully combined and emulsified.

4. Drain any lingering liquid from the lentils, then place them in a medium bowl. Add the vinaigrette, carrot, shallots and parsley. Toss gently, taking care not to smash the lentils. Taste and adjust the vinegar and salt, if necessary. The dressing should have a hint of mustard and enough acidity to offset the richness of the lentils.

5. Serve the salad warm, room temperature or chilled. Keeps in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Nutrition information per serving:
320 calories; 170 calories from fat (53 percent of total calories); 19 g fat (2.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 30 g carbohydrate; 8 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 10 g protein; 230 mg sodium.

A simple, healthy lentil salad tastes anything but

By ELIZABETH KARMEL

Associated Press

When I was in high school, my parents took my sisters and me to Paris. That trip shaped me in so many ways, most of them culinary. So many of the dishes I make even today were inspired by that trip.

One night, we went to a small, rustic restaurant in the heart of the city. The meal started with hunks of cheese, sausages, cornichons and a bowl of “country caviar.” The bread, cheese and meat were as delicious as you would expect, but it was that last item that blew us away.

It’s hard to believe that a trio of sisters from the South would get so excited over a bowl of what basically was just a cold lentil salad. But these lentils were different than the Indian lentils we had eaten in dal. They were small, greenish-black in color and didn’t lose their shape.

It was evident why the restaurant referred to the dish as country caviar. It looked like caviar. The lentils were perfectly cooked so that they were creamy and popped a little in your mouth. They were dressed simply with a homemade vinaigrette slightly pungent with sharp Dijon mustard and red wine vinegar. Minced shallots, carrot and curly parsley added color, crunch and flavor. The dish was simple, but the combina-

tion was rich and the texture addictive.

We couldn’t stop eating it. I asked the owner of the restaurant what they were, and he wrote the name, “Lentilles du Puy” down on a piece of paper and told me I could buy them at a little grocer nearby.

Lentilles du Puy — often labeled green French lentils in the U.S. — are grown in the rugged mountainous region of Auvergne in the south of France. Only those grown near Puy-en-Velay can be called lentilles du Puy. They are grown in volcanic-rich soil and much like old vine grapes are left to grow with no fertilizer or watering, giving them far more flavor. Like other lentils, they are high in protein and fiber. But you will make them because they taste so good, are easy and very satisfying.

Happily, the recipe traveled well, and my sisters and I make the salad often. It is a side dish that goes with just about everything. And this time of year, when I am paying penance for all my holiday indulgences, I am excited to make food that is both healthy and delicious.

Editor’s Note: Elizabeth Karmel is a barbecue and Southern foods expert. She is the chef and pitmaster at online retailer CarolinaCueToGo.com and author of three books, including “Taming the Flame.”



Try making this French lentil salad.

AP Photos/Matthew Mead

This French lentil salad can also be enjoyed as a snack.