WHOLE RED LENTILS WITH CUMIN AND SHALLOTS

SABUT MASOOR

A lovely, nutritious dish, full of fiber and protein. I love it with Tomato Rice (see page 180), a yogurt relish, and a leafy vegetable. You could also serve it with Indian flatbread, pickles, relishes, and a potato dish.

Indian grocers sell this dal as whole masoor or sabut masoor. The red lentil is whole, not split, and still has its brownish skin.

SERVES 4

- 1 cup whole red lentils (sabut masoor)
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1½ tablespoons olive or peanut oil
- Generous pinch of ground asafetida
- ¼ teaspoon whole cumin seeds
- 2–3 dried hot red chilies
- 1 good-sized shallot, peeled and cut into fine slivers
- Butter (optional)
- Lime or lemon wedges (optional)

1. Wash and drain the lentils. Place them in a medium saucepan, add 4½ cups water, and bring to a boil. Skim off the froth from the surface and add the turmeric. Stir, cover partially, and simmer gently for 1 hour. Mix in the salt.

2. Put the oil in a small frying pan and set over medium heat. When hot, add the asafetida. After a few seconds, add the cumin seeds and let them sizzle for a few seconds. Add the red chilies and fry until they darken, then quickly stir in the shallots. Fry until the slivers turn a rich reddish color and become crisp.

3. Tip the contents of the frying pan over the lentils and cover immediately to entrap the aromas. Stir before serving, adding about 2 pats of butter if you wish. Serve with the lime wedges on the side (if using).