

COCONUT LENTIL DHAL PRACTICAL



Introduction

This lesson enables students to gain the knowledge and skills needed to cook The Vegan Society's coconut lentil dhal recipe by Rosie Martin from scratch. Students will have the opportunity to build cooking skills such as weighing, measuring, slicing, using the hob and seasoning, allowing them to practise techniques outlined in the national curriculum. By the end of this lesson, students will have made a healthy, plant-based meal that offers a variety of nutrients, to be enjoyed by themselves and others as part of a nutritionally balanced vegan diet.

This lesson follows the pedagogical approach of I Do, We Do, You Do, which allows you as the teacher to demonstrate the three highest skill moments; a shared cooking phase where the whole class builds the dish together, and then an independent phase where students can immerse themselves in the final steps of the recipe by choosing their additional vegetables and plating up a dish they feel proud of.

The tone throughout should be hopeful and exciting about plant-based food – not about what is missing. Frame dhal as one of the most eaten dishes in the world and use the smell of the blooming spices to win over any cautious eaters.

Relevant Links

Original recipe by Rosie Martin ([The Vegan Society](#))

Fiona Oakes, Vegan Athlete ([The Vegan Society](#))

LESSON OVERVIEW

Timing

100-120mins
(double lesson
required)

Setting

food tech
room

Curriculum links

Cooking & Nutrition KS3 - learning to cook a savoury dish that they can feed to themselves and others; practising a range of cooking techniques; understanding the source and seasonality of the ingredients used.

What you'll need

Recipe Card - Coconut Lentil Dhal,
Slide deck - Coconut Lentil Dhal,
Evaluation worksheet - Coconut Lentil Dhal.

Before the lesson

Print: *Recipe Card - Coconut Lentil Dhal* (1 per student) and *Evaluation Worksheet - Coconut Lentil Dhal* (2 to a page); prepare demonstration area and ingredients and ensure the room is ready for a practical lesson; load *Slide Deck - Coconut Lentil Dhal*.

Learning objectives

1. To apply a range of practical skills to produce a nutritionally balanced plant-based meal from start to finish
2. To evaluate your finished dish using your own knowledge



THE LESSON

Timings are a guide – adjust to suit your class.

Starter - [10 mins]

Resources: Recipe card – Coconut Lentil Dhal

Slide 1

The activity

- This slide is on the screen as students enter.
- Give recipe cards out and ask students to read through the recipe card as they settle.

Potential script

- What you can see on the screen is the dish you're going to make today, from scratch in two hours.
- This dish has been cooked for thousands of years, it's on the menu in restaurants across the UK, and today you're going to make it better than any takeaway.

Slide 2

The activity

- Go through today's learning objectives and key terms.
- Raise awareness to health and safety requirements regarding clothing, hair and hand washing.

Task - I do - [~15 minutes]

Resources: Teacher demo ingredients and equipment

Slide 3

The activity

- Explain to students the cultural context of dhal and the nutritional value of this plant-based meal.

Potential script

- This is a dish that originates from South Asia and is a highly nutritious plant-based meal.
- The main ingredient of this dish is lentils. Lentils are a type of pulse which is a source of protein and fibre – they are eaten worldwide as part of a healthy, balanced diet. They play a role in supporting heart health, digestion, and stabilising blood sugars too!
- Lentils come in different colours and textures – red, green, brown, yellow, black. While some stay more whole, others breakdown once they're cooked – red

lentils do the latter and today we'll be using them as the base for our dish.

- Dhal is a great base meal to learn as it can be adapted with different vegetables and levels of spice according to your desire.
- Meals like dhal are eaten by plant-based athletes. For example, Fiona Oakes has run over 40 marathons and has been plant-based since she was six. Kate Strong holds three world cycling records set in a single challenge. These are people performing at the highest levels, and their nutrition and diet will play a vital role in supporting that. Today you are going to cook the kind of food that fuels athletes like these.

Slide 4

The activity

- Students will watch you as you demonstrate three key skills for this dish.

Demonstration / potential script

Model 1: Knife skills – bridge hold and claw grip on the onion, dicing slowly and evenly. Hold two pieces up to compare their equal size. Draw attention to the safety risk.

- Everyone watch my left hand – this is called the claw grip. My knuckles are forward, my fingertips are tucked back. The blade never rises above my knuckle. If I do this every single time, I cannot cut myself.
- Why does it matter that these pieces are roughly the same size?

Model 2: Blooming spices – add a small amount of oil to the pan and bring to medium heat, then add the spices. Show how the colour deepens, listen for the sizzle and let the smell develop.

- The spices go into hot oil, not cold oil, not water. Wait for one minute and watch what happens to the colour.
- Can you smell that? That's the turmeric and curry powder.
- What do you think would happen if the heat was too hot? ... They'd burn and turn bitter, so keep the heat medium, stir and watch.

Model 3: The reduction – if possible, show pre-made



examples of the sauce at the three different stages (if not go to slide 6 briefly). Draw attention to the before/after expectation of what will happen to their sauce.

- When you add the coconut milk, lentils and water, your sauce will look like this [show demo or image] – thin and watery.
- By the end of the timer, it will look like this [show demo or image] – thick and creamy.
- What has happened during this time? ... Water has evaporated and the starch in the lentils thickens the sauce. This is called reduction.

Task – we do – [~25 mins]

Resources: ingredients, equipment, recipe card

Encourage students who prep early to start washing up and clearing the work surface

Slide 5

The activity

- The whole class starts to prep – weighing, measuring.
- You circulate and narrate as this step is happening.
- Outline that dicing the onion happens after the weighing stage – stop the whole class to remind them of safe bridge hold and claw grip if needed.
- Narrate what they should be smelling, hearing and seeing as the stages progress.
- This early process is a shared experience of the aroma of the spices.

Potential script

- Ok – recipe cards out, everyone starts with step 1. I want everyone to be weighing and measuring first before anyone picks up a knife.
- Once your ingredients are measured – and only then – dice your onion. Bridge hold, claw grip, I'm coming round to check.

Potential questions to ask while circulating

- Is your heat right? How do you know?
- What does translucent mean? Are your onions there yet?
- Have a taste of the sauce, what does it need?
- What are you adding as your additional ingredient at

this stage?

- Is your timer on? Have you accounted for the time adjustment for your additional ingredients?

Task – you do – [~55 mins]

Resources: as before, plus plates/bowls for serving, cameras for documentation

Ensure students are washing up and clearing work surfaces as they go

Slide 6

The activity

- Keep this slide on during the simmering window (around the 55-minute mark).
- Around this point, pause everyone and have a brief whole class moment again.
- This is the anchor of the lesson and a key cooking concept, even if timings are off, protect this learning opportunity.

Potential script

- Stop stirring for a second and look at your sauce. Hands up if it looks thicker now than when you first put it on.
- What's happened? [take answers]. Yes, the water has evaporated and now the lentil starch has thickened and the flavour is more concentrated.
- What is this called? [take answer]. Yes, reduction!

Slide 7

The activity

- These are the timings for the additional vegetables/ flavours.
- Encourage students to add their own personal touch.

Potential script / questions

- Have a taste of your dhal, what does it need? More salt? A squeeze of lime?
- Remember, you are the chef! You make the call.
- Judge your food and modify it where you see it is needed.
- How would you describe your dish? Earthy, warming, rich?



Slide 8

The activity

- Students will begin plating up their dish.
- Encourage deliberate presentation, refer to the images on the slide deck and draw attention to the colours they see.
- Get students to photograph their finished dish as part of their portfolio evidence.
- Time to start tidying up and storing their food (including labelling their dish with their, name, date).
- Circulate the room to ensure that everything is clean and equipment has been put away and stored correctly.

Potential script

- Before you put anything on your plate, take a look at the screen. There are four steps – rice first, moulded into a dome shape, dhal alongside it. Then make sure the additional vegetables can be seen – show off the variety of colours. Lastly, think about garnish, coriander scattered or lime on the rim.
- Remember to photograph the plate before you eat!

Plenary - [10 mins]

Resources: *coconut lentil dhal – evaluation worksheet*

Slide 9

The activity

- After tasting and clearing up the students will complete the evaluation worksheet.
- The slide has the four questions (the same as the worksheet): name it, explain it, season it, argue it.

Potential script

- Once you've cleared up, I want you to fill in the evaluation worksheet.

- Four questions to complete with the last one being the hardest – how would you encourage someone who has never tried plant-based foods to have this dish? Use at least one piece of evidence, a nutrient, a fact or one of the athletes.

Differentiation and SEND considerations

Support

- Seat them next to a confident peer / pre-measure some ingredients / refer to step-by-step / consider which ingredients might be overwhelming for students with sensory sensitivities.

Stretch

- Encourage students to predict what will happen during the reduction process / encourage science vocabulary throughout (evaporation, viscosity, starch).

FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES AND ENRICHMENT

Further learning – Pupils research athletes who follow a plant-based diet using The Vegan Society webpage.

Real-world Connection – Can you find dhal on the menu of a takeaway or restaurant? Did they use extra ingredients or use a different type of lentils?

Family engagement – Students can take home the recipe card to make it again. Could they add other seasonal vegetables? Do their families have recipes using similar ingredients that could be brought in and shared with the class?

