

Baburam Poudel



I was born in the mountains of western Nepal nearly 50 years ago in a village called Nawalparashi. My upbringing was culturally rich and economically poor. To be poor in a third - world country is to be very poor indeed. By the time I was 12 years old, I knew I was attracted to boys more than girls. Same - sex attraction was not heard of in my village of fifty houses. In the remote, rural patriarchal society, Nepalese women had few rights. Young gay men had none. As the AIDS epidemic was spreading through Asia. The news regularly reported police bashings of

gay men and my religion rejected people like me. I did not want to shame my parents. My own internalised homophobia and fear of abuse kept me in hiding. Staying silent meant staying safe. Silence also forced me to live an isolated life. My world brimmed with pretence, anxiety and depression. Despite my strong and brave soul, I wanted to die.

I worked three jobs in one day, seven days a week, sleeping four hours a night. These were my worst days - lost and alone. At times, suicide seemed possible and preferable. I ended up finding a magazine and read an article about the stigma of being gay. It talked about how society's attitudes needed to catch up to the reality of how people live their lives and about how gay men suffered daily discrimination, which

led to depression and suicidal thoughts. For the first time in my life, I understood that I was not the only one. The magazine article had been written by an Australian man, Geoffrey Heaviside. I made contact with him and we became friends. When Geoffrey came to India to set up support and advocacy for gay men, I worked as his translator. Geoffrey advocated for the poor and empowered them to access food, education, housing and employment as well as provided financial, legal and medical support to gay people who had been abused. with gender minorities. In 2007, Geoffrey sponsored me to move to Australia. I got work in kitchens and worked my way up to the position of chef.

My parents passed away a few years ago and my best friend, mentor and housemate, Geoffrey, in January 2020. Now, I walk alone and it has taken me forty-seven years to muster the courage to show my true feelings. There are only a few people who know I am gay, but today, I come out to the rest of the world. The human experience is unique to every individual; my gender identity, sexual attraction & relationship to my body are mine alone. From today, I will not live in hiding. I will live life to the fullest & I will empower people like me to do the same.

The most important people in my life wanted me to live my happiest life. To do so, they have given me an assignment - Do not fear, do not be silent, do not hide yourself & live a full life.

The dish I am sharing is called Kwati, which is a mixed lentil stew, packed full of proteins. It is nutritious, heart-warming and perfect for those cold winter days. I am happy I can share with you a little bit of my culture nestled in the Himalayas in Southern Asia.

KWATI with Babu Chickpea Lentil Soup

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www.thorneharbour.org/thebentspoon

Preparation Time: 10 mins

Cooking Time: 30 mins (with pressure cooker)

2 - 3 hours with regular pot

Vegetarian

INGREDIENTS continued...

2 tablespoons of turmeric powder

1 tablespoon of Cayenne powder

1 x Onion

2 x Tomatoes

3 x Bay leaves

2 x Green chillis

Few cloves of garlic

A small grape-sized piece of ginger

Oil

1 litre of Water

Fresh coriander

Fresh spring onion

Salt and Pepper to taste



INGREDIENTS

30 grams Brown chickpeas

30 grams White chickpeas

30 grams Black eye bean

30 grams Turkish gram

30 grams Kidney beans

30 grams Broad beans

30 grams Pigeon peas

30 grams Dry peas

30 grams Mung beans

30 grams Dried string bean seeds

Tempering spices:

Clarified butter

1 teaspoon of Cumin seeds

1 teaspoon of Carrum seeds



METHOD

- 1) Wash all lentils (chickpeas, beans, peas & seeds) thoroughly and soak overnight.
- 2) Prepare ingredients; finely chop, garlic and ginger, thinly slice green chilli & dice tomatoes.
- 3) Place pot on medium heat and add oil.
- 4) Once oil has heated up, add chopped onion - keep stirring until fragrant and golden brown.
- 5) Add garlic and ginger. Keep stirring for 2 minutes.
- 6) Add bay leaves, chopped tomatoes, tarmac, turmeric, Cayenne powder & chillies. Keep stirring for another 2 minutes.
- 7) Drain pre-soaked lentils, add to pot and cover with water.
- 8) Add generous pinch of salt and pepper.
- 9) If using pressure cooker, cook for half an hour or until pot lets out 5 - 6 whistles.
If using regular pot, allow to simmer on low heat for 2 - 3 hours.
- 10) Just before lentils have finished cooking, heat a separate frying pan on medium heat and add clarified butter for tempering spices.
- 11) Once hot, add cumin seeds and carom seeds to pan until they make a popping sound.
- 12) Add tempered spices to soup and cover with lid for 10 minutes.
- 13) Check for consistency and taste. If lentils have broken down to desired consistency, it is ready to serve.
Adjust salt & pepper to taste.
- 14) Finally add freshly chopped coriander and sprinkle with thinly sliced spring onions.
- 15) Kwati is ready to be served with rice, roti or eaten on it's own as a soup.

