

1st place in the Vegetarian category -- Phyllis Shirk

Lentil Loveliness

Saute in a little oil:

- 2 cups diced onions
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 1 Tbsp minced fresh garlic

Stir in:

- 1/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 Tbsp each chili powder, ground cumin, and dried oregano
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- 1 28 oz can diced tomatoes in juice
- 3 cups V-8 or tomato juice
- 3 cups hot water
- 2 cups dry brown lentils, rinsed
- 1Tbsp chopped semi sweet bar chocolate or chips
- Juice of 1 lime
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Saute onions, peppers and garlic in 2 Tbsp. olive oil until onions begin to soften, 5 minutes.

Stir in tomato paste, chili powder, cumin, oregano, and coriander; cook until paste begins to darken, about 1 minute, stirring constantly.

Add tomatoes, V-8, water, and lentils. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, partially covered, until the lentils are tender, about 45 minutes.

Stir in chocolate until it melts, 2-3 minutes. Add lime juice. Season with salt and black pepper.

Garnish each serving with sour cream and avocado.