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12 oz. red or brown lentils - well washed

1 large yellow onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 celery stalks, chopped

2 medium carrots, chopped

1/2 green bell pepper, chopped

1 – 14.5 can diced tomatoes

1 TBS tomato paste

8 cups water or vegetable broth

1 TBS molasses

1 TBS balsamic vinegar

Chopped parsley for garnish - optional

Olive oil, salt and pepper

Heat a large pot with some olive oil. Add the chopped onions, celery, carrots, bell peppers and garlic. Sauté for 4 to 5 minutes until vegetables are translucent and softened. Add the tomato paste and water. Mix well and dissolve the tomato paste. Add the lentils and cook for about 1 hour, until lentils are cooked through. Add more water if necessary as the lentils rehydrate. Season with salt and lots of pepper. Add the tomatoes with their juice and cook for an extra 20 minutes. Add the molasses and vinegar and cook for a final 5 minutes. Serve garnished with chopped parsley if desired. Enjoy with a piece of crusty bread.

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