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Eggplant, Lentil, and Quinoa Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dried green lentils, rinsed
- 4 ½ cups water, divided
- 5 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 large egg plant, diced
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 1 teas coriander
- ¼ teas cayenne pepper
- 2 tbsp fresh squeezed lime or lemon juice
- 3 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 1 cup packed fresh cilantro or parsley leaves, chopped
- Sea salt

PREPARATION:

1. In a medium saucepan, combine lentils and 3 cups of water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Add ½ teas sea salt and simmer an additional 10 to 15 minutes until lentils are tender. Drain lentils, transfer to a large bowl, and let cool completely.
2. In a large skillet heat 2 tbsp olive oil over medium heat. Add eggplant and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Stir in ½ teas sea salt, 1 ½ cups of water, and tomato paste. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally, and cook for about 20 minutes until eggplant is very tender and the liquid is cooked off.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together coriander, cayenne, 3 tbsp olive oil, and lime juice. Season to taste with sea salt.
4. To the lentils, add quinoa/eggplant mixture and dressing. Gentle tossing until mixed. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes until chilled. Good for up to 4 hours.
5. Just before serving, add cucumber and cilantro. Gently toss to combine.