*lentil* and **tuna** salad

P yields 6-8 servings

*Lentils, dubbed the “poor man’s meat,” are a low-cost source of protein. This delicious recipe is a typical Tuscan picnic dish. It can be made in advance, is healthy, and travels well. It is a perfect addition to a shalosh seudos table or a great summer Shabbos appetizer. Seek out the Italian or French Puy lentils; they make a huge difference in taste and texture. They are nothing like the mushy soup lentils you may be familiar with. They are hearty, intensely flavored, and keep their shape perfectly.*

**1 carrot,** *peeled*

**1 rib celery**

**½ white onion, peeled**

**1½ cups French Puy lentils** *or* **lenticchie di Castelluccio**

**6 whole black peppercorns**

**2 teaspoons red wine vinegar**

**1** *(15-ounce)* **can diced tomatoes**

**coarse sea salt** *or* **kosher salt**

**1** *(200-gram)* **can tuna,** *preferably Rio Mare or other Italian tuna packed in olive oil; don’t drain*

**leaves from 4 sprigs fresh thyme**

**¹∕8 teaspoon cayenne pepper**

**2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**

**2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar**

**sprigs of fresh thyme,** *for garnish*

**Maldon** *or* **other flaky salt,** *for garnish*

Fill a medium pot halfway with cold water. Add carrot, celery, onion, lentils, peppercorns, and red wine vinegar. Bring to a boil.

Place the tomatoes into a strainer to drain; discard liquid. Set aside.

Check the lentils after about 20 minutes, although they may need closer to 30 minutes. Not all lentils cook in the same amount of time, so you will need to taste one. They should be slightly al dente, not mushy and falling apart but not hard. When the lentils are almost done, add 1 teaspoon coarse salt. Stir.

Drain the lentils, rinsing in cold water to stop the cooking. Pick out and discard the carrot, celery, and onion. Place lentils into a large bowl.

Add drained tomatoes and tuna with its oil. Add the thyme, cayenne, olive oil, and vinegar. Stir. Season to taste with more coarse salt, at least ½ teaspoon.

Drizzle with additional olive oil; garnish with a sprig of fresh thyme and a small pinch of Maldon salt.