

Lentils

Did You Know

- Lentils are a pulse crop, part of the legume family, along with dry beans, chickpeas (garbanzo beans), and dry peas. The name "pulse" refers to pols, a thick soup.
- Montana is the top producer of lentils in the United States, producing almost 40% of the lentils grown in this country!
- Like other legumes, lentils add nitrogen to the soil, improving soil health. This makes them a good rotational crop with wheat and other grains.
- Even though many people may not be familiar with them, lentils were one of the first crops cultivated by humans.
- Lentils are highly nutritious and deserve "superfood" status. They are an excellent source of fiber and a good source of potassium, protein, iron, and vitamin B6. Gram for gram, lentils provide more potassium than bananas, more iron than ground beef, and have more antioxidants than blueberries!

Buying Tips

French green, black, red, green, golden, and Pardina (brown) are some of the many varieties of lentils. While any variety is very versatile, each one has unique characteristics including texture, flavor, and color, making them more or less suited for certain culinary uses. Green lentils are larger and very versatile, being suitable for soups, salads, or baked goods as a puree. Golden and red lentils cook quickly and lose their shape, making them great for adding to sauces, thicker soups, mashed potatoes, and to baked goods as a puree. Pardina, Black Beluga®, and French green lentils are smaller and round, hold their shape, and are great sprouted and/or served in soups or salads.



GREEN



RED



DE PUY



BELUGA

Cooking

Prior to use, wash carefully, and pick out debris or rocks. To cook, use 1 cup lentils to 3 cups water. Boil for 15-20 minutes

for salads, or up to 60 minutes for puree, depending on variety and desired texture. Although lentils do not need to be soaked prior to cooking like other legumes, soaking and sprouting does help to increase nutrient availability. Whole cooked lentils can be added to soups, rice dishes, salads, pasta salad, any dish to replace beans, etc. Use lentil puree in hummus, mashed potatoes, and baked goods.

Recipes

Lentil Squash Hummus

With a little prep, this hummus is a quick and healthy snack. Try it with different veggies to find your favorite combination! Peas or cooked beets can be substituted for winter squash.

Source: Jenny and Luca Montague and Jessica Manly, Kalispell Public Schools

Servings

Makes 4 cups

Ingredients

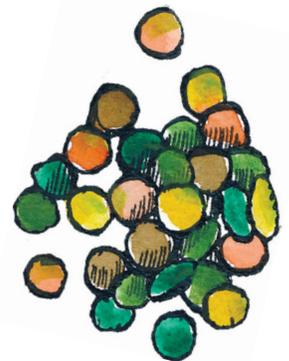
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp tahini
- 1-3 cloves garlic (to your taste)
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1 (15 ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 cup cooked lentils
- 1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups baked pumpkin or winter squash
- 1 tsp ground cumin

Optional spices: dash of paprika or black pepper

While using tahini is preferred for flavor and texture, additional garbanzo beans or cooked lentils can be substituted.

Directions

1. Pulse lemon juice, tahini, garlic, and salt together in a food processor or blender until smooth.
2. Add garbanzo beans, lentils, and olive oil. Pulse until smooth. Add squash, cumin, and spices. Process until well-blended. If hummus is too thick, add 2 tablespoons of water or an additional tablespoon of olive oil.
3. Transfer hummus to a container with a lid and refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving.
4. Store in airtight container in refrigerator.



Lentil Barley Soup

Lentils are shaped like flying saucers, and they come in lots of different colors: regular lentils can be green or brown, and then there are small marbled-green French lentils, Black Beluga® lentils, and “red” lentils that are actually orange. For this soup, use any kind but the red ones (they break down too much and make the soup thick and porridge-like).

Adapted from Chop Chop

Servings

11

Ingredients

1 cup lentils, rinsed and picked over for ones that don't look good

4 scallions, including greens, sliced

1 carrot, scrubbed or peeled and sliced

2 celery stalks, including leaves, sliced

1/2 tsp dried oregano

1/4 cup raw barley or brown rice

12 cups chicken, beef, or vegetable stock

1 (16 ounce) can whole peeled tomatoes, coarsely chopped

salt and pepper

lemon wedges

1 Tbsp fresh basil, parsley, or cilantro leaves

Preparation

1. Put the lentils, scallions, carrot, celery, oregano, and barley or rice, along with the stock into a pot.



2. Place the pot on the stove and turn the heat to high. Bring it to a boil. Once the ingredients come to a boil, lower the heat to low and simmer without the lid on for about 2 hours to thicken the soup. Stir occasionally to make sure it's not sticking.
3. After about 2 hours the pot should be about 1/4 less full than when you started.
4. Add the tomatoes and continue to cook the soup for 1 to 2 more hours, stirring occasionally.
5. Once the soup has finished cooking, taste it, and add a little bit of salt and pepper if you like.
6. Serve the soup right away with lemon wedges and basil, parsley, or cilantro, or store the soup in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Book Nook

Lentil Soup, by Joe Lasker

How Peas Grow, by Joanne Mattern

First Peas to the Table, by Susan Grigsby

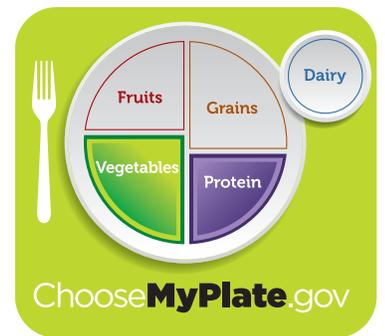
From Bean to Bean Plant, by Anita Ganeri



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mtharvestofthemonth.org.



2 Montana Harvest of the Month: **Lentils**



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. This program is a collaboration between the Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, Montana Department of Agriculture, Montana Organic Association, and FoodCorps Montana. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org

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