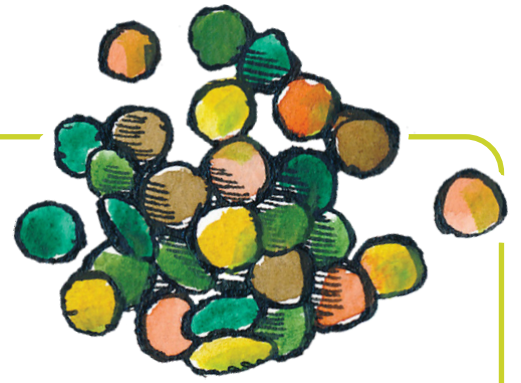


Classroom Bites

# 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.

## Selection

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**

## Storage

Store lentils in airtight containers in a cool, dry place for up to a year. Cooked lentils may be refrigerated up to 5 days or frozen up to 3 months.

## Cooking

Prior to use, wash carefully, and pick out debris or rocks.

**Blend.** Add 1-2 tablespoons cooked lentils to smoothies.

**Cook.** 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 helps to increase nutrient availability.

**Grind.** Using a high-powered blender, food processor, coffee/spice grinder, or flour mill, grind washed and dried lentils until desired consistency. Use in baked goods as a gluten-free, high-protein, and high-fiber flour.

**Pan-fry.** Cooked lentils can be used to make veggie burgers, falafel, or croquette.

**Puree.** Place cooked lentils in food processor and drizzle with olive oil, add seasonings if desired. Blend until smooth. Use puree as a dip for vegetables, spread on sandwiches, base for croquette or patty, or as base for baked goods.

**Risotto, Soups, Stews, or Stir-fry.** Add cooked lentils to soups, stews, or rice dishes for added nutrients and texture.

**Salad.** Chill lentils after cooking. Combine with chopped vegetables, such as tomatoes and broccoli, then toss with a balsamic or Italian dressing. Add to a pasta or green salad for fiber.

**Season.** For added flavor, cook lentils in broth or tomatoes instead of water. To enhance flavor, experiment with allspice, bay, chili powder, cloves, cumin, curry powder, garlic, ginger, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, or thyme.

**Soak.** Cover lentils with 2 inches water, cover, and soak in refrigerator for 10-12 hours.

**Sprout.** In a jar, cover lentils with 2-3 inches of water, cover jar with cheesecloth, and soak for 10-15 hours in dark location. Drain, keeping jar tilted mouth side down for 12-72 hours, rinsing lentils every 12 hours. When sprouted desired time (more time for more developed sprouts, less time to retain lentil shape and texture), spread onto paper towel, dry for 1-2 hours. Refrigerate sprouted lentils in airtight container

up to one week. Lentils can be soaked prior to sprouting in a mild bleach solution (1 teaspoon per gallon) for 30 minutes to reduce bacterial growth.

*Adapted from the Lentils Food Fact Sheet developed by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet and other resources, visit: <https://nutrition.msuextension.org/>.*

## Nutrition Information

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 B<sub>6</sub>. Gram for gram, lentils provide more potassium than bananas, more iron than ground beef, and have more antioxidants than blueberries! The combination of fiber, antioxidants, protein, and other nutrients means a diet rich in lentils may help prevent obesity, certain cancers, and be helpful in management of type 2 diabetes.

## Recipes

### Lentil Squash Hummus

With a little prep, this hummus is a quick and healthy snack. Offer this dip with a variety of chopped veggies and try out different combinations to find your students' favorite! 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 oz.) 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

#### 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

#### Directions

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 1-2 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.

# Activities

## Super Lentils

Adapted from: "It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a ... lentil?" created by Andi Giddings, FoodCorps service member and "The Lentil Song," created by Nicki Jimenez, FoodCorps service member

### Objectives

This lesson discusses the health benefits of lentils and shows the many varieties available.

- Students will be able to describe why lentils are good for their bodies/health.
- Students will know where lentils are grown and that there are many different kinds of lentils.

### Supplies

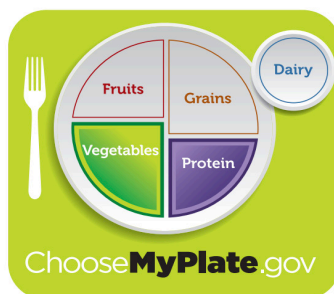
- Lyrics for "The Lentil Song" written on the board or butcher paper. See page four for lyrics.
- 6 egg cartons
- 6 different varieties of lentils (approximately 1 cup - 1 pound of each depending on number of students). Find as many varieties as possible and adjust accordingly. A few varieties available in Montana: Green, Petit Crimson™ (red), Harvest Gold™ (yellow), French Green, Pardina (brown), Black Beluga® (black).
- Small pieces of paper with the names of the lentil varieties – 6 for each variety
- Review lentil varieties in Lentils: Gems in the Treasure State ([www.montana.edu/hhd/documents/facultyandstaff/publications/lentilbooklet.pdf](http://www.montana.edu/hhd/documents/facultyandstaff/publications/lentilbooklet.pdf)).

### Directions

1. Start out by singing "The Lentil Song." Take a moment to discuss some of the lyrics. What does a pod look like? What is a legume? What is protein and why do we need it? Ask the students to list some of the activities they do for which they need protein (example: biking to school, playing baseball, etc.).
2. Lentils offer many health benefits. They are packed with fiber, protein, iron, potassium, vitamin B<sub>6</sub>, and other nutrients. Ask students if they think bananas or lentils (gram for gram) have more potassium (answer: lentils). Ask students whether ground beef or lentils have more iron gram for gram (answer: lentils). Ask students which has more antioxidant power, lentils or blueberries (answer: lentils). Discuss how these foods (bananas, beef, and blueberries) are all considered great sources of those nutrients (potassium, iron, antioxidants, respectively), but the lentil beats them all, making lentil a champion superfood!
3. Inform students that Montana is the largest producer of lentils in the country and that there are many different types of lentils.
4. Split the class into six groups and give each group an egg carton with six different varieties of lentils in each. Give them the papers with the six different lentil names.
5. Students have 5-10 minutes to try to match the name with the lentil.
6. At the end, go over the correct answers. Have them guess what certain words mean like "crimson" (red) and "petite" (small).

## Book Nook

*Lentil Soup*, by Joe Lasker  
*First Peas to the Table*, by Susan Grigsby  
*From Bean to Bean Plant*, by Anita Ganeri  
*How Peas Grow*, by Joanne Mattern



## Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: [mtharvestofthemoth.org](http://mtharvestofthemoth.org).



## The Lentil Song

Developed by Nicki Jimenez, FoodCorps service member. Tune and video of *The Lentil Song* can be found at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUCFtd0Zu4k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUCFtd0Zu4k)

Lyric	Motion
I am a lentil	Arms in circle overhead
I'm small and round	Thumb and forefinger in a shape like you're holding something small
I grow on a plant	Arms up like growing a plant
That comes out of the ground	Bend down and put hands on ground, then rise up like growing a plant
My home is a pod	Hands clapped together over head
Open me up	Open hands above head
Take me out, set me free	Jump and wave arms, like you've just been freed
You will see I'm a seed	Point to eye
If you plant me	Slowly bend down and
Back in the ground	"Plant" a seed in the ground
I will grow big and tall	Grow a plant with your body ending with your arms over head
To make more lentils small	Thumb and forefinger in a shape like you're holding something small
And if you eat me	Motion like you're spooning something into your mouth
You will grow too	Hands on hips, tiptoe and crane neck like you're growing
'Cause the protein in me	Muscle arms
Will help you to succeed	Fists up in victory
Now that you've met me	Pretend (or actually) shake hands
I hope you see	Point to eye
I am small but mighty	Muscle arms
Eat me to be healthy	Fists up in victory

### 4 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 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](http://mtharvestofthemonth.org)

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