



Harvest of the Month: Lentils

Video Transcript

Video Available At:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z8Bph21JuAM>

This month's Montana Harvest of the Month is the mighty lentil! Montana is the top producer of lentils in the United States, producing nearly 40% of the lentils grown in the United States on 140,000 acres. Lentils are a pulse crop and part of the legume family, along with beans and peas. They grow on a small bushy plant that has thin stems. Each pod contains one to two lentils. Like many other legumes, lentils have root nodules that fix nitrogen, which means they can convert nitrogen in the air into a nutrient in the soil that helps plants grow. Growing lentils as a rotational crop with wheat and other grains decreases the need for adding nitrogen fertilizer.

Montana farmers plant lentils in the spring. Once the pods are mature in late summer, the plants are either swathed to promote drying or sprayed with a desiccant, a chemical to dry out the plants. A combine then drives through the field, harvesting and threshing the plants. Threshing is the process of separating the lentil seeds that we eat from the rest of the plant. The lentils are then transported and further sorted to remove unwanted plant material and debris, like small rocks, that are picked up during harvesting. Finally, the lentils are packaged.

Lentils are shaped like flying saucers and are available in many varieties, such as Black Beluga, Red, golden, and French Green so you can eat a lentil rainbow! While any variety is versatile, each one has unique texture, flavor, and color, making them more suited for different uses and recipes than others. Lentils cook faster than most other legumes, like beans. Golden and red lentils cook quickly and lose their shape and can easily be made into dips and sauces. Gardina, Black Beluga®, and French green lentils are smaller and hold their shape, making them a perfect addition to salads and soups.

These little gems are healthy for the earth and for human bodies too! Lentils, like other legumes, are in the vegetable and protein My Plate food groups. They are an excellent source of fiber and a good source other important nutrients like potassium, protein, iron, and vitamin B6. Your body uses fiber to keep your digestive system healthy, help you feel full, and lower cholesterol. Lentils are a tasty and colorful addition to any soup, salad, wrap, baked good as a puree, and many other delicious recipes.

Let's make a yummy lentil recipe — lentil tacos!

Dig Deeper

Get more information, register, or download resources:

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mtharvestofthemonth.org

Lentils are a great way to add an extra punch of nutrients to your meals. Enjoy lentils all month long! The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases a different Montana grown food each month in Montana communities. We hope you will join us in tasting Montana this month!



The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana 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, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org.

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