

A top-down view of a white ceramic bowl filled with cooked black lentils. The lentils are garnished with several pieces of bright orange, roasted vegetable (likely butternut squash) and numerous seeds of a pomegranate, which are a vibrant red. The bowl is set on a light-colored, textured surface. A portion of a dark-colored spoon is visible in the upper left corner, and a white spoon is partially visible in the bottom left corner.

# A DIETITIAN'S GUIDE TO U.S.-GROWN LENTILS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY FARMERS ON A MISSION

TO HELP PROMOTE NUTRITIOUS,

PLANT-FORWARD EATING WITH PULSES





## ALL ABOUT

# LENTILS

## A PULSE SUPERFOOD

Welcome to our lentil resource guide, complete with nutrition facts and studies, cooking tips, recipes and more that you can use or share with your clients, colleagues and followers.

Low cost and packed with nutrition, lentils are accessible, delicious ingredients for those looking to add more plant-based protein and fiber to their diets.

These coin-shaped superfoods are available in a variety of sizes and colors, each type with unique qualities that make them useful in different ways.

Some common lentil varieties include Green, Red, Brown, Pardinas, French Green (smaller and more firm than standard green lentils) and Black.



### NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSE:

#### THE NUTRIENT-PACKED LENTIL

You might be surprised by just how incredibly packed with nutrients these tiny pulses are! Lentils are good sources of soluble and insoluble fiber, which support regular bowel movements and healthy gut bacteria. Just one ½ cup of cooked green lentils provides 32% your daily value of fiber. Popular as a plant-based source of protein, lentils also pack in about 9g of protein per ½ cup cooked serving. They are also low in fat, with 17g less fat per serving than pork, for example. Additionally, lentils contain folate, a vitamin that helps the body build new cells – which studies show is especially important for pregnancy. You'll also get potassium, magnesium and iron in these powerful pulses.



### FAST FACTS

Lentils have been a staple in Middle Eastern and Indian diets dating all the way back to 2500 B.C.

Lentils gained popularity in the Americas during WWII when they were promoted as an alternative to meat.

Roughly half of the world's lentils are consumed in India alone.

In Jewish culture, lentils are a symbol of the circle of life, death, mourning and constant renewal thanks to their round shape and the fact that they have no "eye" like beans do.

In Italy, lentils are served on New Year's Eve after midnight, representing luck and prosperity due to their coin-like shape.



# LENTIL NUTRITION

The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consuming 1–3 cups of pulses per week depending on caloric intake. As an accessible, quick-to-prepare pulse type, lentils are a fantastic option for clients in need of increasing their pulse intake.

They're full of many essential nutrients. Here is the nutrient breakdown for one ½ cup cooked serving of lentils:

## Nutritional breakdown of 1/2 CUP COOKED

## LENTILS

	Calories	Total Fat	Sodium	Carbs	Fiber	Protein	Iron	Potassium	Folate	Magnesium
GREEN	115	<0.5g	<2mg	20g	8g	9g	3.3mg	366mg	179mcg	36mg
RED	170	0g	0mg	28g	5g	12g	4mg	277mg	98mcg	25mg
SMALL BROWN	110	0g	0mg	20g	8g	9g	3.3mg	365mg	179mcg	36mg

## STUDIES FROM THE

## U.S. National Library of Medicine

### LENTILS + NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Lentils are good sources of soluble and insoluble fiber, which support regular bowel movements and healthy gut bacteria. Just a ½ cup of cooked green lentils provides 32% of your daily value of fiber.

Lentils contain polyphenols, which have been linked to health benefits such as heart health and diabetes prevention.

Popular as a plant-based source of protein, lentils pack in about 9g of protein per ½ cup cooked serving.

Lentils are low in fat, with 17g less fat per serving than pork.

Lentils contain the most folate out of the different pulse types, a vitamin that is especially important during pregnancy. You'll also get potassium, calcium, magnesium and iron in these powerful pulses.

With their balance of protein and other nutrients, pulses are considered to be complex carbohydrates and have a low glycemic index.

“ With up to 12 grams of protein in one half-cup serving, lentils are a good source of plant-based protein. Plus, they are full of other nutrients like potassium, folate, iron and fiber. They fit in lots of cuisines and are a great benefit to a vegetarian or vegan eating pattern. ”

—AMY GOODSON, RD





# LENTILS THE BLENDABLE PULSE

While lentils are delicious in their whole cooked form, their texture, shape and ease-of-use make them ideal ingredients for blending with animal protein to boost the nutrients in any meal. Another way to add pulses to your plate.

## HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS FOR BLENDING MEAT WITH LENTILS



Substitute half the ground beef in meatballs with cooked lentils (brown, green or beluga work best)



Substitute 2/3 of the meat source used for burgers with cooked lentils (brown, green or beluga work best)



Substitute half the shrimp, crab or lobster in seafood casseroles with red lentils

## WHAT MAKES LENTILS

A SUSTAINABLE CHOICE

Adding more pulses to your plate—whether through blends or substitutions—is a sustainable choice.

### LENTILS, AND OTHER PULSES:

- ✓ Support a diverse and productive food system by enriching the soil with nitrogen. Pulses have special nodules on their roots that convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form of nitrogen that plants need to grow.
- ✓ Use minimal water to grow.
- ✓ Have an extremely low carbon footprint because they reduce the need for fertilizer, one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.
- ✓ Help to reduce food waste because they are harvested in a dry, shelf-stable form.



# COOKING WITH LENTILS

## + AVAILABLE PRODUCTS

While available canned, dry lentils can also be boiled and ready to eat in as little as five minutes, depending on the type. Some varieties, like split red lentils, cook faster and are a great thickener for soups and purees. Other varieties (like Pardinas or Belugas) hold their shape a bit better when cooked and are a welcome addition to salads or nachos.

“Lentils are not only power packed with nutrients, but they are very versatile and simple to prepare. From red to green to brown to black, lentils are a welcome addition to soups, stews, veggie-based burgers, cold and warm salads and more.”

—ABBIE GELLMAN, MS, MA, RD, CDN



### STOVETOP



**1. Rinse lentils with water—no need to soak!**

Use a strainer to check for pebbles or debris.

**2. Combine lentils & water, bring to a boil.**

For every cup of lentils, use 2.5 cups of water.

**3. Simmer!**

Most types of lentils need to simmer for 20-40 minutes until tender.

Some types of lentils (like split red lentils) only take 5-10 minutes.

### PRESSURE COOKER

**1. Lentils do not require pre-soaking.**

**2. Add dry lentils and water to the pressure cooker.** For every cup of lentils use 2 cups of water (or ensure pulses are covered by at least 2" of water).

**3. Cook on low pressure for 10-15 minutes.** Let the pressure release naturally.

**4. Drain and use in a recipe or store in an air-tight container.**

*Tip: Do not fill the pressure cooker more than halfway, as the ingredients will expand.*

#### TIP



½ cup dry =  
1 cups cooked

## LENTIL

## PRODUCTS

Beyond canned and dry lentils found in the bulk or packaged section at your local grocery store, there are numerous products (and counting) in the store that feature lentils. Below is a list of products made from lentils that can be found in most stores.



**Brands:** Campbell's, Tasty Bite, Progresso, Pacific Foods

**Find them in:**  
Soup aisle, natural foods aisle



**Brands:** Trader Joes, Amy's, Healthy Choice

**Find them in:**  
Frozen foods aisle, natural foods aisle



**Brands:** Harvest Snaps, Simply 7

**Find them in:**  
Chip or snack aisle, natural foods aisle



**Brands:** Barilla, Ancient Harvest, De Cecco

**Find them in:**  
Pasta aisle, natural foods aisle

For clients interested in adding more beans and other pulse ingredients to their diet, we recommend signing up for the **Half-Cup Habit** at [pulses.org/us/half-cup-habit](https://pulses.org/us/half-cup-habit). They'll receive free recipes, cooking guides and more.

## EASY WAYS TO

# ADD LENTILS TO YOUR DIET

Given their quick cooking time, adding lentils to your diet is an easy and convenient way to eat more plants. For these reasons and more, lentils deserve a spot as a go-to pantry staple.

### A FEW TIPS FOR CLIENTS TO ENSURE LENTILS, AND OTHER PULSE TYPES, ARE INCORPORATED INTO THEIR DIET:

- ✓ Grains and pulses are complementary proteins, meaning when eaten together, you get all nine essential amino acids. Try throwing lentils in with your quinoa, brown rice or farro – they'll cook at the same time and the lentils will add a boost of protein and fiber
- ✓ Blend green or brown lentils with ground meat and seasonings for taco filling, burger patties or spaghetti bolognese
- ✓ Use red lentil puree instead of oil when baking cookies for a protein-rich dessert
- ✓ Cook a classic pot of lentil soup filled with seasonal veggies for a comforting meal



- ✓ Thicken soup using pureed split red lentils
- ✓ Toss lentils in salads for an easy source of added protein
- ✓ Try your hand at cooking a staple Indian dish called dal – you can find many simple and flavorful recipes online
- ✓ Spread canned or cooked lentils on top of tostadas, dollop on nachos, or layer into enchiladas
- ✓ Toss cooked lentils with your favorite seasonings for a tasty side dish or mixed in with roasted veggies



# HEALTHY LENTIL RECIPES

These easy-to-prepare recipes come packed with nutrients and are a simple way for adding plant-based lentils to plates.

## INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp coconut oil or ghee  
1 yellow onion, diced  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1 inch piece of ginger, peeled & diced  
1 tbsp curry powder  
1 tsp garam masala  
½ cup red lentils  
4 cups cauliflower, chopped into florets

1 medium sweet potato, peeled & cubed  
1 15oz can coconut milk  
1 28oz can diced tomatoes, with juices  
½ tsp sea salt  
½ tsp black pepper  
¼ cup cilantro, chopped  
1 cup quinoa, cooked

## DIRECTIONS

1. Add coconut oil or ghee to a large pot over medium heat.
2. Add onion, garlic, and ginger and sauté for 5–7 minutes, or until fragrant.
3. Stir in curry powder and garam masala powder and cook in oil for 1–2 minutes.
4. Add in the remainder of the ingredients (red lentils, cauliflower florets, sweet potato, coconut milk, diced tomatoes, sea salt, and black pepper.) Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 30–35 minutes, or until curry has thickened slightly and cauliflower and sweet potatoes are tender.
5. Serve curry with quinoa and garnish with cilantro. Enjoy!

## Cauliflower Red Lentil curry



## Northwest Chili

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup onion, chopped  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 ½ tbsp canola oil  
1 cup dried lentils, rinsed  
½ cup carrot, shredded  
1 tsp oregano, dried  
½ tsp pepper, black  
1 green bell pepper, seeded & chopped

1 tbsp chili powder, or to taste  
2 ½ cups water  
2 tsp beef or vegetable bouillon cubes  
1 14.5oz can tomatoes  
1 8oz can tomato sauce  
1 15oz can chickpeas, drained & rinsed  
¼ tsp red pepper flake, or to taste  
salt & pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large, heavy saucepan, cook onion and garlic in oil for 3 to 4 minutes. Add lentils and stir to coat them with oil.
2. Add potatoes, carrots, bell pepper, chili powder, water, and bouillon. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer about 25 minutes, or until lentils are tender.
3. Add tomatoes, breaking them up as you do, and tomato sauce, chickpeas, and red pepper. Simmer for another 15 minutes. Season to taste with red pepper, salt, and black pepper.

## INGREDIENTS

6 cups watermelon, cut in 1" cubes  
1 ½ cup black, puy, or beluga lentils, cooked  
¼ cup feta cheese, crumbled

10 mint leaves, finely sliced  
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 tbsp white wine vinegar  
salt and pepper, to taste

## DIRECTIONS

1. In a large salad bowl, combine the watermelon, lentils, half of the feta and half of the mint.
2. In a small container, whisk together the olive oil and vinegar. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Pour olive oil mixture over the watermelon mixture. Toss gently to combine. Top with remaining feta and mint before serving.

## Lentil Watermelon Salad





**For additional sources, studies, or recipe ideas,  
reach out to [PulseTeam@ThinkMaxwell.com](mailto:PulseTeam@ThinkMaxwell.com), or peruse  
the Nutrition Professionals page on [USAPulses.org](http://USAPulses.org) at  
[USAPulses.org/Nutrition-Professionals](http://USAPulses.org/Nutrition-Professionals).**

