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
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.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Total Fat</th>
<th>Sodium</th>
<th>Carbs</th>
<th>Fiber</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Iron</th>
<th>Potassium</th>
<th>Folate</th>
<th>Magnesium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>0.1g</td>
<td>1mg</td>
<td>20g</td>
<td>8g</td>
<td>9g</td>
<td>3.3mg</td>
<td>366mg</td>
<td>179mg</td>
<td>36mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0mg</td>
<td>28g</td>
<td>5g</td>
<td>12g</td>
<td>4mg</td>
<td>277mg</td>
<td>98mg</td>
<td>25mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Brown</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0mg</td>
<td>20g</td>
<td>8g</td>
<td>9g</td>
<td>3.3mg</td>
<td>365mg</td>
<td>179mg</td>
<td>36mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5713359/
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4738404/

STUDIES FROM THE U.S. National Library of Medicine
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**

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

**What makes lentils a sustainable choice**

- 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.
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.

**PRODUCTS**

**SOUPS & MEALS**

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

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

**FROZEN MEALS**

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

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

**SNACKS**

**Brands:** Harvest Snaps, Simply 7

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

**PASTA**

**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. They’ll receive free recipes, cooking guides and more.
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.
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**

- 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
- 115oz can coconut milk
- 128oz can diced tomatoes, with juices
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped
- 1 cup quinoa, cooked

**Northwest Chili**

- 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 bouillion cubes
- 18oz 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

**Lentil Watermelon Salad**

- 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
- ¾ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- salt and pepper, to taste

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.
For additional sources, studies, or recipe ideas, reach out to PulseTeam@ThinkMaxwell.com, or peruse the Nutrition Professionals page on USAPulses.org at USAPulses.org/Nutrition-Professionals.