

Lentils

Growing & Harvesting

Grow. Lentils are a cool season plant much like other legumes. Montana produces almost 40% of U.S. lentils. They are tolerant to frosts in the seedling stage, allowing for early planting a week or two before the last spring frost when soil temperatures are a minimum of 40°F. In the garden, seeds should be planted at approximately 1 inch deep about 2 inches apart. Plants can be thinned to 4-6 inches apart and trellised if desired. Excessive watering can kill plants which need approximately 10 inches of water throughout the growing season. Irrigation should be stopped when pods begin to dry.

Harvest. Pods can be harvested green and lentils eaten much like shell peas. Dried lentils for storage should be harvested at approximately 80-100 days maturity when pods have completely dried. Lentils should be removed from pods for long-term storage. Visit www.msuxextension.org for more information or contact your Extension office.

Selection

French green, black, red, green, golden, and pardina (brown) are some of the many varieties of lentils.

While every variety is versatile, each one has unique characteristics of texture, flavor, and color. Green lentils are larger and suitable for soups, salads, and in baked goods as a puree. Golden and red lentils cook quickly and lose their shape, making them great for adding to sauces, to thicken soups, mashed potatoes, or baked goods when pureed. 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.

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.

Nutrition Information

Like other plant-based foods, lentils contain no cholesterol, fat or sodium. Lentils provide protein, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc and other minerals. These also contain phytochemicals which may help to reduce the risk of cancer and other diseases.

Uses

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

Cook. Use 1 cup lentils to 1 1/2 cups water. Boil for 15-20 minutes for salads or longer for puree, depending on variety and desired texture.

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 croquettes.

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, patty, or 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 and protein.

Season. For added flavor, cook lentils in water, broth or tomatoes. To enhance flavor, experiment with low-sodium seasonings such as allspice, bay leaf, cardamom, chili powder, cloves, cumin, curry powder, garlic, ginger, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, thyme or turmeric.

Soak. Cover lentils with 2 inches water, cover, and soak in refrigerator for 10-12 hours. Although lentils do not need to be soaked prior to cooking like other legumes, soaking and sprouting helps to increase nutrient availability.



Food Safety Tips

1. **Clean.** Wash hands and food contact surfaces often.
2. **Chill.** Keep produce and food cool and chill promptly.
3. **Separate.** Keep produce and food separate from raw meats and eggs.
4. **Cook.** Cook food to the safe temperature.

Questions? Click on www.foodsafety.gov

Preparation: Step-by-Step



Wash hands. Thoroughly rinse lentils to remove any dirt.
Check for rocks and other debris.



Strain lentils.
To cook, use 1 cup lentils to 1 1/2 cups water.



Add lentils to water and bring to a boil. Simmer for 15-20 minutes for salads or longer for puree. Cooking time varies due to variety and desired texture.



Add desired seasonings. Serve alone or use in soups, stews or other dishes. Best chilled prior to use in salads or purees.

For More Information:

Montana State University Extension: www.msuextension.org
MSU Extension Master Gardener: www.mtmastergardener.org
MSU Extension Food and Nutrition: www.msuextension.org/nutrition
MSU Extension Nutrition Education Programs: www.buyeatlivebetter.org

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