

Early Care  
& Education  
at Home

# 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.
- 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 B6. Gram for gram, lentils provide more potassium than bananas, more iron than ground beef, and have more antioxidants than blueberries!

## Buying Tips

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**



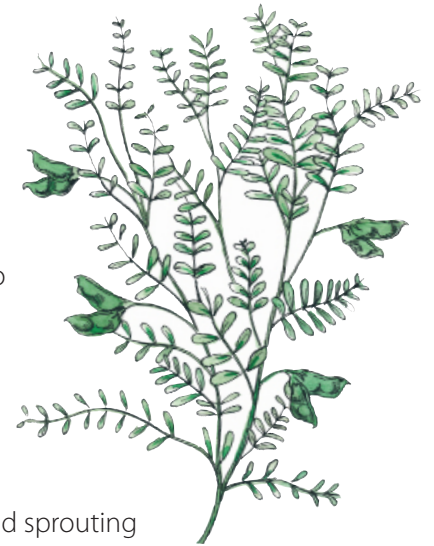
**DE PUY**



**BELUGA**

## Cooking

Prior to use, wash carefully, and pick out debris or rocks. 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 does help to increase nutrient availability. Whole cooked lentils can be added to soups, rice dishes, salads, pasta salad, any dish to replace beans, etc. Use lentil puree in hummus, mashed potatoes, and baked goods.

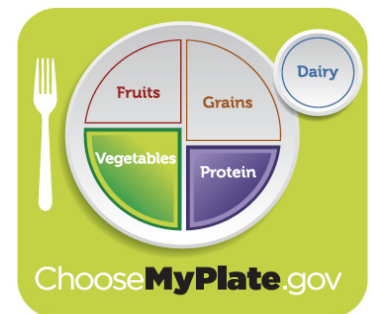


## Conversation Starters

- What food are you going to eat first? What are you going to save for last?
- The legume family is lentils, dry beans, chickpeas, and dry peas. Who's in your family?
- Q: What did one bean say to the other bean?  
A: *How you bean?*
- Q: What do you get when you mix beans and onions?  
A: *Tear gas!*

## Dig Deeper

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





# Lentil Barley Soup


Servings

6



## Ingredients

1/2   1/2 cup lentils uncooked, no salt, rinsed (any color you like!)

 2 scallions, greens included, chopped


 1 carrot, scrubbed and sliced


 2 celery stalks, greens included, sliced


1/4   1/4 tsp dried oregano


1/8   1/8 cup barley or raw brown rice

 6 cups chicken, beef or vegetable stock

 8 oz whole peeled tomatoes, chopped

 Salt and pepper, to taste

 1 lemon, cut into 6 wedges

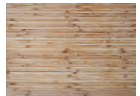
 1/2 Tbsp fresh basil, parsley or cilantro leaves

## Tools

 Large Pot

 Large Spoon

 Knife

 Cutting Board

## 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.



## 2 Montana Harvest of the Month: Lentils



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](http://mtharvestofthemonth.org).

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