

# FRESH OFF THE PRESS



MARCH 2019 NEWSLETTER

L I V E Y O U R W H O L E L I F E

## LOVING LENTILS

If you're trying to eat a more plant-based diet or just improve your health in general, look to lentils for a boost. These little legumes are satisfying, nutrition-rich and easy to prepare.

Lentils are sold alongside dried beans, but unlike most beans, they don't need to be soaked overnight before cooking. All you have to do is boil them with liquid and they are ready to eat in about 30 to 45 minutes.

The ease of cooking has made lentils a favorite food of cooks for centuries. Historians think people have been eating them since at least 8000 B.C., and over the years, lentils have served as staple food for both poor and rich alike. Lentils came to the Americas with the Spanish and Portuguese explorers, but did not become common to the U.S. diet until World War II, when they were promoted as a low-cost, widely available and highly nutritious alternative to meat.

Lentils are an especially important source of nutrients for vegetarians around the world. Pair

them with nuts, seeds or grains—such as rice, quinoa, corn or farro—and you have a complete vegetarian protein source (meaning all of the essential amino acids are present).

But their nutritional value isn't limited to vegetarians. Lentils have superfood qualities: In addition to protein, they also provide significant amounts of iron, magnesium, potassium and B vitamins. They contain phytonutrients, natural compounds produced by plants that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that help prevent disease. Additionally, they contain lots of fiber and are digested slowly, so they won't cause a spike in your blood sugar levels.

Perhaps best of all, lentils are considered a lucky food. According to ancient Roman tradition, people would tie a small leather bag to their belt and fill it with lentils in the hopes that the lentils would transform into gold coins. Today, many Italians still consider lentils lucky and eat them on December 31 to bring good fortune in the new year.

# VARIETIES OF LENTILS

The different types of lentils vary in color and texture. Here's how to choose the right one for your recipes.

## BROWN LENTILS

Flat, khaki-colored, lens-shaped brown lentils are the most common supermarket variety. Sometimes called green lentils, or just generic "lentils," brown lentils are slightly bigger than other varieties and have a mild, earthy flavor. They cook in 20 to 30 minutes and are most often used in soups, stews and dips because of their soft texture.

## RED LENTILS

These lovely hued lentils are usually referred to as "red," but sometimes appear more yellow or orange in color. They are sold hulled and split. They cook in 20 minutes or less, quickly breaking down into a thick, mushy texture. They're commonly used for Indian daal and other curry dishes.

## FRENCH LENTILS

Also referred to as lentils du puy or French green lentils (not to be confused with the larger, flatter, more common green/brown lentils), this variety is thick-skinned and takes a little longer to cook, about 45 minutes. They retain a firm but tender al dente-like texture that is perfect for use in salads and side dishes.

## BLACK LENTILS

Perhaps the favorite but least common variety, black lentils are small and spherical. They are sometimes called Beluga lentils because they resemble caviar. Their thicker skin helps them keep their shape when cooked. Cook for about 30 minutes for an al dente texture, and 40 minutes or more for a softer texture.



## DID YOU KNOW?



Unlike most other beans, lentils don't need to be soaked before cooking.



Lentils have been found in Egyptian tombs dating as far back as 2400 BC.

## MEDITERRANEAN LENTIL SOUP

- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 onion (diced)
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 2 Italian turkey sausages (meat squeezed out of casing), sliced
- 32 ounces chicken broth
- 1 can (14 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup dried lentils
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 bay leaf

Heat the oil in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté for three minutes or until clear. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds.

Add the turkey Italian sausage and cook about eight minutes until brown. Add the remaining ingredients.

Bring the soup to a boil; reduce the heat and simmer for 15 minutes.

Recipe yields: 8 servings | Per Serving (1.5 Cups): 270 Calories, 0.8g Fat, 165mg Sodium, 9.6g Fiber, 12g Protein, 52.6g Carbs, 12g Sugar

Source: American Diabetes Association



## HEALTH BENEFITS OF LENTILS

**FIBER:** One cup of cooked lentils provides 15 grams of fiber, or approximately half of the daily recommended amount.

**FOLATE:** Lentils have more folate than any other plant-based food. A B-vitamin, folate helps protect against disease and is especially important for women who are pregnant because it helps prevent birth defects.

**IRON:** Iron is needed to form the hemoglobin in blood that carries oxygen to the cells. With one cup of cooked lentils providing about a third of daily iron needs, lentils can help everyone, and particularly vegetarians, get enough iron.

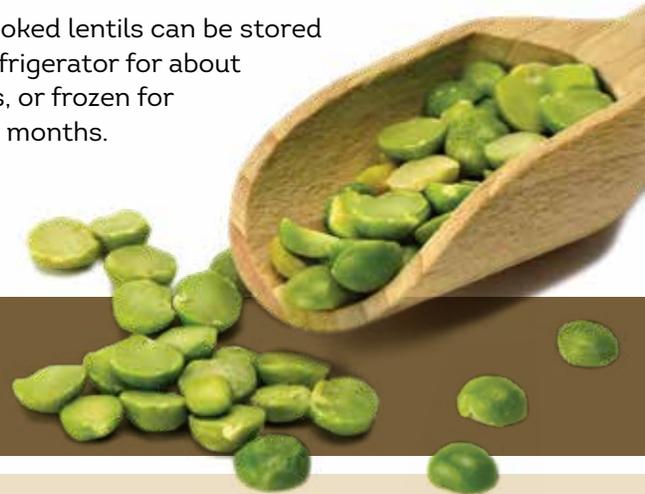
**MANGANESE:** Lentils are a very good source of manganese, an essential nutrient that protects bones and prevents disease.

**POTASSIUM:** Potassium helps lower blood pressure, but many people don't get enough of it in their diets. Regularly eating lentils, which are rich in potassium, can help you get enough.

**PROTEIN:** Lentils are one of the cheapest sources of protein available, and gram-for-gram have more protein than beef. Lentils are, however, a nutritionally incomplete protein source—to make the protein complete you just have to eat them with nuts, seeds or grains.

## BUYING, COOKING AND STORING LENTILS

- You can find lentils next to the bags of dried beans and rice, or in bulk bins in most grocery stores. Brown lentils are the most commonly available. But other varieties have become easier to find as lentils have become more popular.
- Once home, store them in an airtight container in a cool, dry place and try to use them within a year. Older lentils will take longer to cook and may have inferior texture.
- Before you cook lentils, check them first for any stones or debris (and remove), and rinse with cold water.
- General cooking instructions call for adding one cup of dry lentils to three cups of boiling water, reducing the heat to simmer until the lentils are tender, and then draining any excess liquid.
- Cooking times differ by the type and freshness of the lentils, anywhere from 15 to 45 minutes.
- Plain, cooked lentils can be stored in the refrigerator for about five days, or frozen for up to six months.



For many centuries, lentils were considered “the poor man’s meat.” Catholics who couldn’t afford fish during Lent would eat lentils instead.

### MILLET PANCAKES WITH LENTIL PUREE

2 teaspoons sesame oil	2 Tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 small onion, diced	6 scallions, minced (reserve 1/4 cup for lentil puree)
2 cloves garlic, minced	1 egg
1 Tablespoon fresh ginger, grated	2 egg whites
2 teaspoons Asian hot sauce	1/3 cup unsweetened coconut milk
2 cups red lentils	3 Tablespoons corn starch
3 1/2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth	2 cups whole millet
	Nonstick cooking spray

Add one teaspoon sesame oil to a sauce pan over medium heat. Sauté onions, garlic and ginger until onions turn clear (about four minutes). Add one teaspoon hot sauce and lentils. Stir to coat with oil.

Add the broth and one tablespoon soy sauce. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Simmer, covered, for 20 minutes.

Puree the lentils using an immersion blender or food processor and stir in scallions.

While the lentils are cooking, whisk together egg, egg whites, coconut milk, remaining hot sauce and remaining sesame oil until smooth.

Whisk in the cornstarch until there are

no lumps remaining. Stir in the soy sauce, cooked millet and all but one-quarter cup of the scallions.

Add the cooking spray to a non-stick skillet over medium high heat. Using a quarter cup measure, scoop the pancake batter onto the sauté pan and use a rubber spatula to flatten. Let cook for three minutes or until very golden brown. Flip the pancake and cook another three minutes or until very golden brown.

Repeat procedure for remaining seven pancakes, spraying the pan in between each pancake.

Use pancakes to dip in lentil puree.

Recipe yields: 8 servings | Per Serving (1 pancake): 260 Calories, 3g Fat, 260mg Sodium, 12g Fiber, 16g Protein, 44g Carbs, 5g Sugar

Source: American Diabetes Association

# 3 TIPS TO BOOST YOUR HOME WORKOUT

Are you tired of the same old workout routine at home? Do you want to increase your exercise intensity? Here are a few tips to help you kick things up from the comfort of your living room, basement or garage.



## 1 MIX IT UP

If you typically participate in only one type of exercise, integrate something new. Adults ages 18 to 64 need aerobic, muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening exercise. The good news is that some exercises can wrap all three together, such as jumping rope, playing basketball or running on a treadmill. Turn up the intensity with the talk test: If you can talk while you are active, then you are working at a moderate level. If you can say only a few words before needing to catch your breath, you are making a vigorous effort and are reaping more health benefits.

“Just keep in mind that you never want to be gasping for air. Your intensity level should feel challenged but also comfortable,” said Tina Ermert Bortner, BA, ACE, Lourdes community health educator. “Warming up, stretching and cooling down are also vital components to a fitness program that can help prevent you from getting injured.”

## 2 FIND A COMPETITIVE OUTLET

A friendly contest can push you harder to achieve your fitness goals. Research has found that competition can motivate you to move more, especially if you are comparing your fitness progress to that of your peers online. Invest in a step tracker that connects to an online fitness program or smartphone app—you can have some fun competition with your friends and family members as you step your workouts up a notch.

“Engaging in group wellness programs just might give you that extra motivation to stay on course, and perhaps even exceed your goals,” said Bortner.

## 3 EXERCISE WITH A FRIEND

It’s more fun to exercise with a friend, who can also hold you accountable to your fitness goals.

“Feelings of guilt for ‘blowing off’ a workout tend to be stronger when you know a friend is depending on your energy and enthusiasm to exercise,” said Bortner.

# TAKE THE SURVEY

Federal law requires that nonprofit hospitals to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment once every three years. The research compiled is used to illustrate and compare health trends and disparities across the region. Hospitals use the findings to develop and implement strategies to address the perceived health needs.

Lourdes Health System will be participating with the South Jersey Health Collaborative—consisting of hospitals, health systems and health departments within Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Ocean counties—to undertake this comprehensive study in 2019.

We ask that you please participate in the five-minute survey. Your input is vital to ensure our hospitals meet the health needs of our region.

To take the survey in English, visit <https://goo.gl/yEuYd6>.

To take the survey in Spanish, visit <https://goo.gl/BHVbFP>.

## OPEN HOUSES

Considering a career as a nurse or radiation technologist? Join St. Francis Medical Center on March 7 from 4 to 6:30 p.m. to learn more about its Schools of Nursing and Radiologic Technology.



The open house for both schools will be held in the hospital’s Crean Hall Auditorium, 601 Hamilton Avenue, Trenton. Prospective students can tour the schools, meet faculty and staff, have questions answered and enjoy refreshments.

Reservations are not required. Free parking is available at the medical center’s parking garage. For more information, call **609-599-5190**.