

12 Great Ways to Use...

Lentils

Lentils are small but nutritional powerhouses of the legume family. A half-cup of cooked lentils has a whopping 9 grams of protein, more than nearly any other legume, and 8 grams of fiber. Plus, compared to other kinds of dried beans, lentils have the added advantage of being quick and easy to prepare. Although they should be rinsed and checked for dirt and debris before cooking, there is no need to pre-soak them. Three varieties of lentils are most widely available: green, brown, and red. The green have a nutty flavor and will stay firm when cooked. Brown lentils soften during cooking, and risk becoming mushy if overcooked. Red lentils are the quickest to cook, and will lose their shape, turning a yellow-orange color when cooked. The different types make lentils a versatile addition to your diet!

1. Put cooked lentils in your salad! You can also “pop” your lentils by placing cooked lentils in a skillet with a small amount of oil until they plump, or pop open, and toast slightly. This gives them a crunchy texture that contrasts nicely over greens.
2. Construct creative lentil side dishes. Lentils work well with a variety of flavor profiles, so you can take a side dish in a multitude of directions. Dress with olive oil and lemon juice to pair with chicken, or take a French twist by adding cloves in a sauce of Dijon mustard and red wine vinegar to pair with salmon.
3. You can feature lentils as the main course. Replace meat with lentils for a vegetarian Sweet Potato Shepherds Pie.
4. Soups, stews and chili are ideal plates for lentils. You could make a spicy, Mexican infused chili with lime and cilantro, you could take a Moroccan twist on vegetarian stew with cumin and garam masala notes, or try a lighter Asian flavor soup with hints of lemongrass and ginger in coconut milk.
5. Add lentils to your stir-fry. You can use lentils as your protein for your favorite stir-fry combinations, or as a base instead of the usual accompaniment of rice.
6. Try lentils as a filling for Stuffed Peppers. Combine cooked quinoa, lentils, cashews and spices like thyme and basil to fill bell peppers for a unique vegetarian take on a classic.
7. Use lentils as a meat replacement in tacos. Simmer lentils in a combination of cayenne pepper, cumin and paprika to create a delicious spicy filling for your tacos, or with chipotle peppers and adobo for a more smoky flavor.
8. You can even have lentils for breakfast! Cooked lentils can be added to baked breakfast bars or muffins. Uncooked lentils can be ground up to create a protein-packed powder to add to breakfast smoothies.
9. Make your own South Indian bread with lentils. Urad Dal bread is made using urad dal lentils (which can be found online or from an Indian store) and is a dense, moist sandwich bread. Dosas are another type of South Indian food, which uses the urad dal lentils to form wide, thin crepes.
10. Sprout lentils! Sprouting lentils is a simple process that can be done with any variety as long as they are whole (not split or dal). Rinse your lentils, then soak them for about 8-12 hours. Drain your lentils, rinse again and place in a large jar filling about 1/3 of the space (remember they are going to grow!). Cover the opening of the jar with cheesecloth secured with a rubber band. Twice a day rinse the lentils and drain through the cloth, making sure there is no puddle in the jar. After about 4-5 days you’ll see the little green leaf emerge and they’ll be ready to harvest.
11. Use lentils as a meat substitute in your favorite pasta sauce. Whip up a veggie-packed lentil and mushroom ragu with bell peppers and onions, or take a twist on a classic Stroganoff.
12. Lentils are great additions to veggie burgers. Cooked lentils combined with cooked quinoa, rolled oats and spices make flavorful, protein-packed patties that are ready for your favorite toppings..

