



Give Them More  
of the  
Good Stuff!

# Lentil Basics

## Shop and Save



- ✿ Uncooked (dried) lentils are inexpensive. Purchase them pre-packaged or from bulk bins.
- ✿ Cooked lentils are available canned or frozen but may cost more. Rinse canned lentils under fresh water to lower the sodium content.
- ✿ Bulk bins are a great low-cost place to find different kinds of dried lentils. Remember to note the recommended cooking time for different types.
- ✿ International food markets may have many varieties of dried lentils.

### Lentil Math

1 pound = 2 ¼ cups dry  
1 cup dry =  
2 to 2 ½ cups cooked

Lentils are an excellent source of protein and dietary fiber.



Tasting for tenderness is the best guide to doneness.

## Types of Lentils



- ✿ Lentils do not need to be soaked, and cook more quickly than beans.

- ✿ Check the package or bulk bin for cooking time.

**Brown lentils**—flat shape; tan color; most common type; labeled as “Lentils”; cost the least; mild flavor; keep their shape unless cooked for a long time or at a rapid boil.

**Green lentils**—flat shape; pale green color; widely available; mild flavor; keep their shape.

**French green lentils** (de Puy)—small; dark green; peppery taste; keep their shape but have a slightly longer cooking time.

**Red lentils**—red, orange, or yellow; turn golden when cooked; mild, slightly sweet flavor. Red lentils are split, so they cook quickly but can become mushy.

**Black lentils** (Beluga)—small and round; black, shiny; strong earthy flavor; often more expensive; longer cooking time.

## Store Well Waste Less

■ Store dried lentils in an airtight container in a cool, dark, dry place. Use within 1 year for best flavor and less cooking time.



■ Cooked lentils can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for up to 3 months. Divide into recipe-sized portions for quick use.

# Cooking with Lentils

## How to Cook Lentils

Cooked lentils add low-cost protein to meals. Use them in soups, stews, salads, tacos, wraps, lasagna, and rice bowls or mix with ground beef in hamburgers and meatballs. They also taste great on their own with some seasoning. Lentils are quick and easy to cook:

- 1 Sort the lentils to remove any shriveled lentils, stones or other seeds/plant parts. Just before using, rinse in a colander under cold running water.
- 2 Measure lentils and water or broth into a saucepan. Use 2 1/2 to 3 cups liquid for each 1 cup of lentils. Add any desired seasoning except salt.
- 3 Bring the water just to a boil.
- 4 Reduce the heat so the water barely simmers (a few small bubbles) and cover with a lid.
- 5 Simmer until tender, about 20-30 minutes for brown lentils. Add water as needed to make sure the lentils are barely covered. When lentils are tender, add salt (1/4 teaspoon/dry cup) if desired and adjust other seasonings.

Visit [FoodHero.org](http://FoodHero.org) for more recipes using lentils.

## Lentil Taco Filling

### Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup chopped **onion**
- 1/2 cup chopped **bell pepper** (any color)
- 1/4 teaspoon **garlic powder** or 1 clove **garlic**, minced
- 1 teaspoon **oil**
- 1/2 cup dried **lentils**, rinsed
- 4 1/2 teaspoons **chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon ground **cumin**
- 1/2 teaspoon dried **cilantro** or **oregano** (optional)
- 1 1/4 cups **broth**, any flavor

### Directions:

1. In a large skillet, sauté the onion, bell pepper and garlic in oil until tender, about 3 minutes.
2. Add the lentils, chili powder, cumin and cilantro/oregano (if using). Cook and stir for 1 minute.
3. Add broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until the lentils are tender, 20 to 30 minutes for brown lentils, adding water if necessary to keep lentils covered.
4. Uncover; cook until mixture thickens, 5 to 10 minutes.
5. Use for tacos, wraps or salads.
6. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

**Makes** 2 cups

**Prep time:** 10 to 15 minutes

**Cook time:** 30-45 minutes

*Lentils may look more attractive with a dash of paprika or a sprinkle of green parsley or cilantro.*



When kids help make healthy food, they are more likely to try it. Show kids how to:

- find and remove small rocks or other seeds and plant parts from dried lentils.
- use a colander to rinse lentils under cool running water.
- wash or chop vegetables.