

Lentils



There are many types of lentils to choose from, such as brown, red, and green. These tasty legumes are packed with protein, complex carbohydrates, and fiber to keep you satisfied. They are also inexpensive and cook up quickly to make a variety of main dishes, salads, and sides.

Getting Started

First, decide if you want to use dried or canned lentils. Unlike dried beans, dried lentils do not need to be soaked, so they cook quickly. Split lentils cook even faster than whole.

Canned lentils are precooked, so they are great for quick meals. Buy canned lentils with no salt added and make sure the can is not dented, bloated, rusted, or leaking.

Equipment

- Large pot or saucepan
- Colander
- Can opener (for canned lentils)

How to Cook Dried Lentils

1. Pour dried lentils into a colander and remove any pebbles.
2. Rinse the lentils well with cold water.
3. Pour the rinsed lentils into a large pot.
4. Cover the lentils with fresh water. Use about 2½ cups water for 1 cup dried whole lentils. You will need about 2 cups water for 1 cup dried split lentils.
5. Bring the water to a boil over high heat. Turn the heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally. Whole lentils will cook in 20–35 minutes. Split lentils take 5–20 minutes. (Check packages for specific cooking times.)
6. Add salt to the lentils after they finish cooking. Adding it sooner will make lentils tough.

How to Cook Canned Lentils

1. Open the can with the pull tab or a can opener.
2. Pour the lentils into a colander to drain any liquid. Rinse well with running water to remove extra salt.
3. Place the lentils in a saucepan and cover them with water. Cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes.

Recipe Ideas

- Fill a tortilla or taco shell with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked lentils for a protein-packed main dish. Add 2 tablespoons each of your favorite toppings, such as salsa, low-fat cheese, and shredded lettuce.
- Add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked lentils to a bowl of broth-based soup or stew.
- Replace half the butter or oil in bread recipes with lentil puree.
- Top a green salad with warm or cold green lentils.
- Serve broiled or poached salmon over a bed of warm lentils.
- Combine lentils with rice, barley, quinoa, or couscous.
- Toss 2 cups cooked, cooled lentils with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped parsley or cilantro, 1 cup diced cucumber, 1 cup diced tomato, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup diced red onion. Dress with your favorite vinaigrette. Serves 4.

