

# Lentils

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Lentils are a great combination of slow releasing (low GI/GL) carbohydrates and vegetarian protein, making them an ideal food for anyone interested in balancing blood sugar be it for weight loss, better energy levels or a more even mood. Lentils also provide both insoluble fibre, which helps prevent constipation, and soluble fibre which can help lower cholesterol levels.

Lentils are a good source of a number of minerals, in particular magnesium, zinc and iron, all of which are vital for cellular energy production. Magnesium can also help us relax, supports good blood sugar control and is important for a healthy heart. Zinc is needed for many processes in our bodies, including a strong immune system, hormonal balance and healthy skin.



Lentils are also a good source of folic acid which has been shown to help prevent neural tube defects in pregnant women and, together with vitamins B6, B12 and magnesium, helps lower elevated homocysteine levels. High homocysteine levels have been associated with many conditions including heart disease, depression and recurrent miscarriages.

Lentils come in several varieties, the most common ones are green, brown, red split and Puy lentils. They are easy to prepare and unlike beans, do not need to be soaked before cooking. Lentils make a great addition to soups, stews, casseroles and salads. See overleaf for some ideas.

# Recipes

## Lentil and Nut Roast

*This is a delicious vegetarian roast. Serve with a salad or green vegetables.*

Serves 4

150g red spit lentils  
75g walnuts, ground  
75g hazelnuts, ground  
1 tbsp coconut oil  
1 large carrot, coarsely grated  
2 celery sticks, finely chopped  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
100g mushrooms, finely chopped  
1 tbsp mild curry powder  
1 tbsp tomato puree  
1 egg, beaten  
Freshly ground black pepper  
200ml water

Soak the lentils in cold water for 1 hour.

Gently fry the vegetables in the coconut oil over a low heat for 5 minutes. Stir in the curry powder and cook for another minute. Leave to cool.

Drain the lentils and mix them with the ground nuts and vegetables. Add all remaining ingredients and mix thoroughly.

Grease a 1kg loaf tin and line with baking paper. Press the mixture into the tin and bake for approximately 1 hour at 190°C until just firm. Check halfway through and cover with foil if the top starts to burn. Leave to stand for 15 minutes then turn out and peel off the paper. Serve with a green salad or vegetables.

## Lentil Feta and Spinach Salad

*This salad is ideal for lunch. It is very satisfying and will keep you going for a long time.*

Serves 2-3

200g Puy lentils  
2 red peppers, quartered and deseeded  
150g baby spinach leaves  
100g feta cheese, cubed  
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
2 tsp balsamic vinegar  
1 garlic clove, crushed  
Freshly ground pepper

Place lentils in a saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 30 min or until lentils are soft and drain.

Place peppers skin side up under the grill and cook until the skins are turning black. Allow to cool and remove skin. Slice the flesh into strips.

Combine lentils, peppers, spinach and feta cheese and mix with the olive oil, balsamic vinegar and garlic and season with pepper. Serve at room temperature.

## **Lentil Chicken Soup**

*Serves 4-6*

1 small chicken  
1 bouquet garni  
2 onions  
300g red split lentils  
2 tbsp butter  
3 cloves of garlic  
1 tsp sweet paprika powder  
1 pinch ginger  
1 pinch cardamom  
1 pinch cayenne  
rind and juice of 1 untreated lemon  
2 carrots, grated  
200g baby spinach

Cook chicken with one of the onions, roughly chopped, and bouquet garni in 1.5 litre water for two hours. Drain chicken and leave to cool enough to remove the meat.

Cook the lentils in half the chicken stock.

Finely chop the second onion and the garlic. Gently fry onion and garlic in the butter until soft. Add spices and fry for another minute. Add stock, lentils, meat, rind and juice of the lemon and grated carrots. Gently heat for 5-10 minutes. Add baby spinach and allow to wilt.