

Harvest of the Month

Lentils



The Palouse region of eastern Washington and the Idaho panhandle, with its commercial center at Pullman, Washington, constitute the most important lentil-producing region in the US.

All about Lentils

History

- The word *lentil* comes from the Latin *lens*, and indeed, this bean is shaped like the double convex optic lens which took its name from lentil.
- Lentils are one of the first foods to have been farmed and have been an important food since prehistoric times.
- Lentil seeds dating back 8000 years have been found at archeological sites in the Middle East.
- As a tasty and plentiful source of protein, lentils graced the tables of peasants and kings alike.
- The Bible tells the story of Esau, who gave up his birthright for a bowl of crimson lentils.



Lentil Varieties

- There are hundreds of varieties of lentils. Around fifty types are cultivated for food.
- They come in a variety of colors, including, yellow, black, red, brown, and green. Some varieties lend a nutty and slight peppery touch to the palate.

Reasons to Eat Lentils – A powerhouse of nutrition

- Lentils are a very good source of cholesterol-lowering fiber, which prevents blood sugar levels from rising rapidly after a meal.
- Lentils also provide good to excellent amounts of seven important minerals, B-vitamins, and protein—all with virtually no fat.
- Lentils can increase your energy by replenishing your iron, an integral component of hemoglobin, which transports oxygen from the lungs to all body cells, and is also part of key enzyme systems for energy production and metabolism.
- Unlike red meat, another source of iron, lentils are not rich in fat and calories.



Lentils are part of the Legume (pea) family, all of which grow in a symbiotic relationship with soil-dwelling bacteria. The bacteria take gaseous nitrogen from the air and feed this nitrogen to the plant; in exchange the plant provides carbohydrates to the bacteria. This is why legumes are said to "fix" nitrogen when they are turned under for the next crop or used for compost.

