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# lentils

Spilling the beans about our favorite quick-cooking legumes. *by Lori Longbotham*



**What they are:** These small, flat shrub seeds cook quickly and, unlike most dried beans, don't require presoaking in water. The larger brown kind are great for soups. Little green *lentilles du Puy*, from the Puy region of southern France, are by far the best choice for salads (as in the recipe here) because they stay firm after cooking. Lentils also come in black and red varieties.

**Health benefits:** Lentils are packed with protein, complex carbohydrates, and fiber; they also contain calcium, vitamin B, and iron. More slowly digested than other high-fiber foods, these legumes leave you feeling fuller longer.

**Where to find them:** Brown (and sometimes green) lentils are available at most grocery stores with the dried beans. For other types, try natural-foods stores like Whole Foods Market or online sources such as [www.chefshop.com](http://www.chefshop.com).

**Some ideas:**

- Drizzle cooked green lentils with extra-virgin olive oil, lemon juice, and salt. Serve alongside roast salmon, duck, or grilled sausages.
- Combine prepared lentils with shredded cheddar to make meat-free "burgers"; cook in a skillet.
- Simmer red lentils with onions; blend with cumin, cayenne, curry powder, and garlic. Puree and serve as a dip for carrots or pita bread.

## lentil salad with tomatoes and watercress

Prep: 10 minutes Cook: 20 minutes

Serves 6

Rinse lentils well, and simmer them gently to reduce splitting. Check for doneness after about 18 minutes.

*Vinaigrette:*

- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon minced capers, drained
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

*Salad:*

- 1½ cups petite green or brown lentils
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ cup finely chopped celery, with some leaves
- ½ cup finely chopped red onion
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 12 cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup chopped fresh chives, divided
- 4 cups trimmed watercress

1. To prepare vinaigrette, whisk together all ingredients. Add salt and black pepper to taste.
2. To prepare salad, combine 4 cups water, lentils, and bay leaves in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer 18 to 20 minutes. Drain; discard bay leaves. Gently stir together lentils, celery, onion, parsley, and salt. Add tomatoes and 2 tablespoons chives. Drizzle with vinaigrette; toss gently to coat. Divide watercress evenly among 6 plates; top with ¾ cup lentil mixture. Top with remaining 2 tablespoons chives.

PER SERVING (about 1½ cups salad): Calories 208; Fat 5g (sat 1g, mono 3g, poly 1g); Cholesterol 0mg; Protein 11g; Carbohydrate 31g; Fiber 8g; Iron 3mg; Sodium 210mg; Calcium 86mg



