

### description

Lentils are flat, round, lens-shaped members of the dry legume family. The seeds are commonly classified by size and colour. Small lentils (less than 40mg/seed) are commonly called 'Persian' types, while large lentils (more than 50mg/seed) are known as 'Chilean' varieties. The seed may have green, yellow, or red cotyledons with a dark brown, green, or transparent seed coat. Canada is the world's largest exporter of green lentils. The two most common Canadian varieties are Laird, a large lentil (seed diameter of 6mm), which is the industry standard, and Eston, a small lentil (4-4.5mm diameter), which has the benefit of retaining its shape when cooked. The Foodgrains Bank has also shipped French Green (Dark Speckled) and red varieties. The following table classifies Canadian lentil varieties by colour and size.

Size	Green	Red
Small	<b>Eston</b> French Green (Dark Speckled) Matador Milestone Royale	<b>Crimson</b> Redwing
Medium	Richlea Gold Vantage	Red Chief
Large	<b>Laird</b> Glamis	

### uses

Lentils provide protein and energy, as well as B-vitamins and minerals. Unlike most dry pulses, they do not require pre-soaking and cook relatively quickly. Asia is the area of highest lentil production and consumption. Curried *dhal*, as it is known, is a common meal throughout countries such as India and Bangladesh. The lentils are often mixed with fish or other vegetables, satisfying local tastes and providing more complete protein. Variety preferences may be based on factors such as taste, appearance or cooking time.

### limitations

While lentils are a good source of protein, they do not provide *complete* protein. Like any vegetable protein source, they are deficient in certain essential amino acids – the building blocks of protein needed to maintain body tissues and functions. Lentils are low in the amino acids methionine and cysteine. However, when lentils are consumed with grains such as wheat and rice, which have a higher proportion of methionine and cysteine, this deficiency is reduced.

### nutritional information

Nutritional content per 100g

Source: USDA

variety	energy (kcal)	protein (g)	fat (g)	protein quality*
Red Lentils	346	25	2	62%
Green Lentils	338	28	1	62%

\*Limiting amino acid (met + cys) as % of total protein compared with recommended % based on egg protein

### cost

Pulse prices tend to fluctuate significantly. However, lentils are relatively inexpensive on the Canadian market.

### storage

Green seed coats will discolour with age. Aging may also increase cooking time as the seeds become desiccated. Lentils should be stored in dry conditions, out of direct light.

### substitutes

Most other pulses are acceptable nutritional substitutes, depending on local tastes.