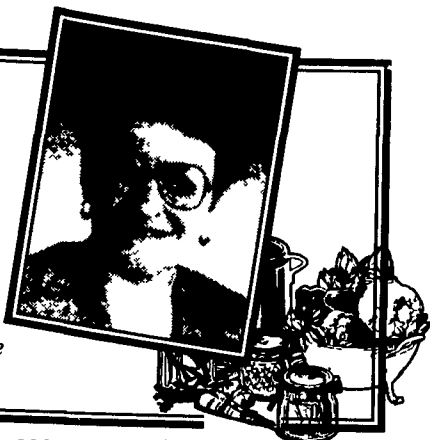


Consuming Thoughts

by

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Lentils have been an Old World classic for thousands of years. Now they're becoming stars on all types of New World menus. From trendy restaurants to school lunch programs, from elaborate at-home brunches to easy family suppers, lentils are turning up in soups, stuffings, salads, sandwiches, and more.

Why?

Because they are versatile, ways to prepare, quick to cook, inexpensive, satisfying and very, very nutritious.

Lentils are good for you! They are low in fat, calories, and sodium, and are high in complex carbohydrates, fiber and protein. And, they have no cholesterol.

Lentils fit all the recommendations for today's prudent diet, as suggested by nutrition and

medical experts, including the National Cancer Institute and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Versatile lentils are diet food. In addition to being low calorie (only 116 calories per half cup serving) they are filling and satisfying because they are high in fiber and complex carbohydrates.

Lentils can go with vegetables, pasta, fish, meat, fowl, and more. Puree cooked lentils to create pates, spreads or dip, or to add to quick breads, muffins or carrot or zucchini cake for extra moistness and fiber. Lentils are easy to sprout, for superb snacks or to toss into salads, soups or sandwiches.

Lentil chili, lentil taco salad, lentil spaghetti sauce, lentil

burgers, lentil and chicken salad, lentils and pasta, lentil salad in pita bread—the possibilities are endless.

To cook lentils, just rinse and pick over, then simmer on top of the range, or covered in the microwave on high, in water (twice the amount of water as lentils), or as the recipe directs. Drain, if needed, and they're ready. If you wish, add seasoning or flavorful ingredients to the cooking water, since lentils absorb flavors well. Do not add acid ingredients, such as tomatoes or lemon juice, until later, since they will slow cooking. Salt should be added at the end of the cooking time for the same reason.

Lentils need to be pre-soaked before cooking. Just 20 minutes simmering, or less, makes them tender and ready to eat or use in recipes.

Red Chief Lentils, bright and coral-colored, have been decorticated (skinned) and cook in even less time—6 to 8 minutes maximum. These pretty lentils are especially nice for salads and side dishes. Here's a recipe to get you started serving lentils.

Chicken Lentil Salad

2/3 cup lentils
1 1/2 cups water
1/4 cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise
2 tablespoons chopped green onion
dash Tabasco sauce
1 cup diced cooked chicken
1/2 cup diced celery
1/2 cup diced cucumber
1/4 cup diced green pepper
4 cups salad greens

Thoroughly rinse dry lentils on cold water; removing any damaged pieces and foreign material. Drain. Place lentils in a heavy sauce pan, add water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes. Do not over cook, lentils should be tender, with skins intact. Drain immediately and refrigerate until cool.

In a small bowl, stir together mayonnaise, green onion and Tabasco sauce.

In a medium bowl, toss lentils, chicken, celery, cucumber and green pepper with dressing. Cover and refrigerate for an hour or more to allow flavors to blend.

Just before serving, arrange on crisp greens. Yields 4 servings, 1 cup salad each. 210 calories, 7 gr. fat; 33 mg. cholesterol; 123 mg. sodium

POTATO PARMESAN MUFFINS

1 medium potato, peeled, chopped
1/2 cup water
1/4 cup milk
1 1/2 cups flour
3 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoons dried basil, crushed

1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 egg, beaten
1-2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese

In a small saucepan, cook potato in water, covered, over medium heat for about 10 minutes or until tender. Do not drain. Mash until smooth or place mixture in blender container and blend until smooth. Add milk to make 1 cup. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, cheese, baking powder, basil, and baking soda. Mix well.

Combine potato mixture, oil and beaten egg; add all at once to flour mixture. Stir just until moistened. Spoon into greased or paper-lined muffin cups. Sprinkle tops with parmesan cheese. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from pan and cool on wire rack. Makes 10 muffins.

Potato Board

Cook's Questions

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3/4 cup sugar
2 cups milk
2 egg yolks, slightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla

Melt butter, blend in corn starch, sugar, and salt. Gradually add milk, heat to boiling over direct heat, stirring constantly. Stir in slightly beaten egg yolks. Return to heat and cook two minutes more, stirring constantly. Add vanilla. Pour directly into baked pie shell.

Meringue:

3 egg whites
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
3 tablespoons sugar

Beat egg whites and cream of tartar with electric mixer. Beat until very stiff. Add 3 tablespoons sugar and beat until sugar is dissolved and egg whites stand in peaks. Sprinkle the top with coconut. Be sure to seal egg whites to edge.

Bake at 400 degrees until meringue is evenly browned 8-10 minutes.

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