

## August Product of the Week

### Lentils

Lentils are one of a group of grain legumes or 'pulses' grown for human consumption. In Australia both red and green lentils are grown. Australia produces about 250,000 Tonnes of lentil, mostly in Victoria and South Australia. Much of the crop is exported, going mostly to the Indian sub-continent, in particular Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Lentils, like all pulses, are a very nutritious food, high in protein (20-30 g per 100 g) and low in fat. Lentils are high in dietary fibre - important for healthy bowel function, soluble fibre that lowers blood cholesterol, and have a low glycaemic index or GI (<55) helping to lower glucose and insulin levels. They also contain antioxidants, Vitamin E, selenium, phenolic acids, phytic acids, copper, zinc and manganese. Pulses are gluten free, offering a great variety for those on a gluten free diet. Pulses suit vegetarian diets when combined with other foods but one needs a Vitamin C source for iron absorption and grains, nuts or rice to balance the essential amino acids.

Lentils have for centuries been an important part of the diet of millions who eat little or no animal protein, especially in south Asia, and are also a valuable addition to the diet of all Australians. Lentils don't require soaking prior to cooking and whole green lentils are commonly used in soups and casseroles. They are also used to make patties or loaves. Split red lentils are used for making dhal, soups, purees, casseroles, patties and loaves. Deep-fried lentils are used as a snack food, while lentil flour can be combined with cereal flour to make breads and cakes.

### Lentil Soup

*Serves 4*

Ingredients:

1 Tbs olive oil  
1 brown onion  
2 cloves garlic  
2 stalks celery  
2 carrots  
½ cup white wine  
1 cup dried Australian green lentils  
1 litre vegetable stock  
1 lemon, juice and zest  
½ bunch dill (or parsley, as preferred or if dill unavailable), finely chopped

Method:

1. Chop onion and garlic finely and dice the celery and carrot.
2. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat.
3. Cook onion gently for 5 minutes until soft then add garlic, carrot and celery and cook a further couple of minutes while stirring to prevent burning.
4. Add white wine, stock and lentils.
5. Bring to the boil, lower heat and simmer half an hour until lentils are soft.
6. Add lemon juice, zest and dill or coriander at end of cooking and adjust seasoning as desired.

Variation: Add 1 tin of diced or crushed Australian tomatoes with the stock.

Adapted from Grains and Legumes Nutrition Council.