

your

COMMISSARY ... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Lentils and Brown Rice

In popular culture, we often see families sitting down to a nice big dinner with meat as the centerpiece. It's rare to see a vegetarian meal as a gathering place. We also may feel pressured to make a meal with meat every night for this reason. But making meals the whole family will love or that fit into your high performance fitness needs doesn't have to be this involved. There are many vegetarian, even vegan, meals you can make once and have leftovers that will last days, while still getting enough protein and not tasting like it's a leftover.

Over the past several years there has been a *Go Meat Free One Day a Week* movement. Substituting plant-based foods for meat can improve heart health and reduce your risk of diabetes. Going meatless doesn't have to be just on one full day, you can sprinkle it throughout your week and change it so your lunches are meat free or alternate days. This week, try taking one meal where you normally have meat and replace that meat protein with a plant based protein like legumes.

Legumes are a great source of protein and fiber. They're inexpensive and can be used in a variety of ways like soups, salads, and as a meal's main source of protein. Lentils, in particular, are made up of over 25% protein and a great source of iron. One cup of lentils contains around 18g of protein which is around 36% of your daily value of recommend protein based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Just remember that with lentils, the fiber is almost as high as the protein, so eating too many of them without being used to a high fiber diet may cause some discomfort. The best place to start is to watch your portion size and spread them out throughout the week.

This meal is quite versatile. Unlike other dried beans, lentils don't require soaking so they're a perfect pantry staple that can be made in 20 minutes with minimal effort. The base of lentils and rice can be paired with any side. If it's grilling season, try it with grilled corn on the cob or a shish kabob of grilled veggies. The spices in the lentils can be mixed up to make them spicy, savory, or add in some stewed tomatoes and curry. You could even use the lentils as a dip, with stalks of celery or cucumber slices as the chip. However you season your lentils, this is an easy beginning of the week meal to make and portion out for your lunches during the week.



Ingredients: 4 servings

- 1 cup brown rice
- 2¼ cups water
- 1 cup dried lentils
- 1½ cups diced raw celery
- 1½ cups sliced carrots (fresh,
- unpeeled)
- 1 medium to large onion, diced
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1½ tbsp. dried curry powder
- 3-4 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 bay leaves
- 1-2 dashes of dried red pepper flakes
- 3½-4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth

Directions:

1. Begin cooking rice according to package directions.
2. In a very large skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the celery, onions, carrots, and salt. Sauté until the onions become clear (about five minutes), stirring constantly. Add the garlic and cook for an additional minute.
3. Add the lentils and 3½ cups of vegetable broth, curry, bay leaf, pepper flakes and lentils. Bring to a boil and let boil for one minute. Turn heat down to medium, cover and cook for an additional 20 minutes stirring occasionally. Check for doneness. The lentils should be tender. If not, cook a little bit longer, checking every 5 minutes. Add a bit more broth if needed to prevent the lentils from sticking throughout the cooking process. If more liquid is needed than 4 cups of broth, add 2 tbsp. of water at a time. Once the lentils are soft, uncover and let the lentils sit for few minutes to absorb some of the extra liquid. Gently stir.
4. Serve by placing ¼ of the rice on a plate topped with ¼ of the lentils. Consider serving alongside sliced fresh cucumbers and tomatoes that have been lightly salted.

Tips:

- Try this recipe with dried split peas, but adjust the water according to the package directions.
- Serve the lentils over a bed of couscous.
- This freezes well. So make a larger batch, portion in a container and freeze for an on-the-go dinner or lunch when life is hectic!
- Add in extra veggies like eggplant and or zucchini.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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