

TastEd Beans, Pulses and Peas Lessons – Upper KS2

Good Luck Lentils

See



Learning objectives

Duration: 45 minutes - 1 hour and 15 minutes

The focus of this lesson is using our sense of sight to explore dried and cooked (canned and/or home cooked) lentils as well as to explore the idea of lentils as a sustainable food and to consider some food cultures in which lentils are considered a lucky food.

Resources

Equipment: Can opener if needed (check if cans have ring pulls), sieve or colander, a couple of large bowls, a couple of serving spoons, reusable plate and spoon for each child. Paper napkins as needed.

Optional: A double convex lens to show that lentils look like a lens

Food to buy:

1 x bag dried split red lentils

1 x bag dried green lentils (any kind)

Optional: More types of lentils of different colours to look at e.g. black, yellow or Puy.

2 x cans green lentils

Olive oil

Salt

2 x bunches of fresh mint

Preparation:

Dried lentils

Put the lentils in jars for the children to look at.

Green lentils

Drain the canned green lentils and put them in a bowl with a little olive oil and salt.

Wash the mint leaves and separate off a couple of mint leaves for each child.

If you have time, cook some red lentils for the children to taste ahead of the lesson

Red lentils

For a small taste for 30 children, put 200g red split lentils in a pan with 500ml boiling water from a kettle. Simmer for 20-30 minutes. Skim off the scum that appears after the first few minutes. The lentils are done when they are tender. Season with a little oil and salt and store in a Tupperware box for the children to try.

Safety: explain to the children that the dried lentils in the lesson are only for looking at not tasting
Before you start, make sure the children wash their hands.

Lesson Outline

1. Today we're doing TastEd - that means we're going to be exploring new foods using our senses.
2. Has everyone washed their hands?
3. Ask the class, 'Can anyone tell me what the five senses are?' Sight, touch, hear, smell and taste. For each sense ask the children which part of the body they use.
4. Remind them of the two golden rules: NO ONE HAS TO TRY and NO ONE HAS TO LIKE anything.
5. Today is about sight. We are exploring how lentils look (and tasting some, if we like).
6. Has anyone ever tried lentils? Encourage an open conversation. Give children space and encouragement to say what they thought.
7. Lentils can be cooked in many different ways. Dals in India. Emphasise deliciousness, spice.
8. Lentils are an ancient crop. Lentils are seeds!
9. Lentils are actually now grown in the U.K.
10. Compare lentils to other foods that are seeds inside pods. Talk about peas and who likes peas.
11. Lentils as an important source of protein in the diets of ancient Egyptians.
12. Lentils as a sustainable protein food.
13. In Italy (and Brazil), lentils are a good luck food. Eat them and get rich at New Year!
14. Why do Italians think lentils bring good luck?
15. They think they look like coins. Let's look at some real green lentils to see if we agree. This stage should take a while. Pass round a jar of lentils and ask every child for their observations while the rest of the class listens. Try to draw out observations that are similes as well as talking about colour and shape. If they say the lentils are green ask them 'are they frog green, olive green, grass green or goblin green?' Ask them to write down observations.
16. Introduce the idea of different colours of lentils. Pass round other lentils and ask them to write down observations.
17. Are red lentils really red? No, orange! And when they are cooked, they go yellow.
18. Split lentils. Why are they called this? They are split in half.
19. Latin word for lentil was lens. This is where our word lens comes from.
20. We can't eat dry lentils. Explain about cooking them.
21. Now shall we try some lentils. Pass round plates with; some canned green lentils, some cooked red lentils, some mint leaves and encourage children to try.
22. How did the lentils look when you tasted them? Share observations and ask them to write them down if there is time.
23. How did they taste? Share final observations. Do we agree that lentils are lucky?
24. Did anyone try anything new today?

Word Bank for Lentils

Size / Shape: tiny, round, flat, split, whole, oval

Texture: round, dry, grainy, hard, soft, mushy

Colour: brown, green, red, yellow, black, olive, frog green, goblin green, forest green, olive green

Sounds: Rattle rattle – *lentils shaking in a jar or container*; Tip-tap – *as they bounce across a table*; Patter patter – *when you pour a handful onto a surface*

Similes: Like a coin, like a lens, as smooth as skipping stones, as round as tiny buttons, like a pebble, like a pill, like a turtle shell, like a flower petal, like a shrunken bean

Success Criteria

- I can use my sense of sight and different words to describe lentils that are dry and cooked
- I understand that there are different ways to 'try' food, e.g. I can try a food with my eyes as well as with my mouth.
- I can talk about what I like and understand that not everyone has the same tastes.
- I can explain some of the ways in which lentils are a varied and sustainable food.

Curriculum Links

Sustainability and Climate Change: ‘learning about the importance of sustainability’

D & T: Cooking and Nutrition: ‘apply the principles of nutrition and healthy eating’
‘know where and how a variety of ingredients are grown’

Science: Plant Science.

Writing: Composing a sentence orally before writing it.
Writing narratives about personal experiences.

School Kitchen

Link to any lentil dishes served at school lunch. Or if your school doesn’t currently serve lentils, link to peas and beans on the menu.

Reading links for teachers and children

Teacher

[Why you shouldn't ignore lentils and peas—protein-packed superfoods](#) - National Geographic (2025)

Extra Resources for Children: short stories, poem (see appendix)

We have put together a series of short stories and poems to share with your pupils, these can also be used as inspiration for children to write do their own creative writing focussing on lentils.

Optional further activities

D&T:

- Research different types of lentil dishes from around the world
- Write step-by-step instructions for a lentil recipe and cook it together

Geography:

- Create a world map of all the places lentils grow. Discuss how lentils have adapted to different parts of the world and are a key aspect in promoting sustainable farming practices e.g. soil health, rotational cropping.
- Discuss crop rotation - what is it, why is it important, what crops are usually used. Students could create a worksheet showing a simple crop rotation cycle - with each crop coloured in a different colour and matched to what it does for the soil.
- Use lentils as a discussion point to talk about climate change resilience and local food systems.

Science:

- Lentils can be used for sprouting in class, making a simple, hands-on biology experiment to observe plant growth and talk about seed germination.

Background facts for teachers

Pulses are the dried edible seed of plants from the legume family, which include beans, dry peas, chickpeas and lentils.

Environment:

Lentils are nitrogen fixers— as part of the legume family, lentils have a special relationship with bacteria in the soil. These bacteria help capture nitrogen from the air and add it to the soil—reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers and improving soil health.

Lentils need very little water compared to many other protein sources. They grow well in dry conditions and are an ideal crop for a **warming climate**.

Introducing lentils into crop rotations can reduce pests and diseases, support pollinators, and make farms more resilient—an excellent way to explore **biodiversity** and **agroecology** with students. Lentils are a great entry point to explore **global food systems**, **sustainability**, and the question: “Where does our food come from?”

Cooking:

Unlike most dried beans, lentils cook quickly and don’t need to be soaked overnight. Just rinse and go!



These lessons have been produced in collaboration with Beans is How, with financial support from the US Dry Bean Council. Beans is How is a global campaign to double the consumption of beans, peas, lentils and other pulses by 2028, bolstered by a Coalition of 120+ partners. Beans are a simple, affordable solution to help address malnutrition, climate change, biodiversity loss, and food affordability.

