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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

March 2019

BLACK BELUGA LENTILS

**Black Beluga Lentil Salad with Parsley
in the French Style**

**Black Beluga Lentils and Artichoke Hearts
in Tomato – Sausage Sauce**

Black Beluga Lentils and Wild Rice *Pilaf*

***Ragoût* of Lentils**

Since lentils are said to bring prosperity and are eaten on New Years Day in Italy and Hungary, I thought exploring one of my favorite lentils varieties, the black Beluga lentil, might be of interest to you who are trying to add more legumes to your diet.

It is said that more than fifty varieties of lentils are grown in India alone. The tiny, nutrition-packed pulse, grown for over 13,000 years, thanks in great part to its ease of cultivation and drought tolerance, has spread throughout the world from our earliest evidence of cultivation in the eastern Mediterranean. Excavations at the Franchthi Cave in Greece found evidence of lentils dating from 11,000–7,500 BC; Palestinian evidence of cultivation dates from 8,000 BC. By 6,700 BC many areas of the Middle East and Near East, including Turkey, were cultivating lentils. Suffice to say, it was an important crop in the ancient world.

In the first century AD Pliny described lentils from seed to bowl as well as defining medicinal uses for the tiny legume, and delineating the varieties available to the ancient Greeks. The thoroughness of his observations has been a great service to modern-day food historians. We know that the black lentil was not in his inventory. This interesting variation may have originated in Syria but it was really unknown here until a leguminous cover crop, 'George Black Medic,' developed by Montana State University, was introduced commercially in the 1990s by an organic farm in Montana.

Black Beluga lentils are shiny black orbs that stay firm during the cooking process giving color and texture. They are named for the caviar which they resemble, a resemblance that I take advantage of from time to time when garnishing a dish.

Lentils are grown and eaten extensively in Asian cuisines. I grew up with lentil soups made in the German style that my grandmother and her mother prepared. In the journey to research my book I found a very different and very delicious soup from Nepal that is made with the black Beluga lentils which you can find on pp. 681-82 of volume I of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*. In the same volume, on pp. 553-54, you can find a Saudi recipe for black lentils and potatoes that is quite unique. Split and skinned, black Beluga lentils are known as *urad dal* in Indian cooking so any Indian *dal* recipe, and there are hundreds, could be used to introduce your family to this lentil variety.



A serving of one-half cupful of lentils can provide over 30% of the suggested daily requirement of dietary fiber, 45% of our daily folate needs, and contribute a whopping 18% of daily protein, when complemented. Once viewed as “poor man’s meat,” appreciation of the protein, folate, and fiber that lentils can contribute to the diet have increased popularity here in the United States although the black Beluga lentil seems to have less appeal than do the green, brown, and red (orange) varieties.



BLACK BELUGA LENTIL SALAD WITH PARSLEY IN THE FRENCH STYLE *Salad de Lentilles Noir au Persil*

TPT - 1 hour and 45 minutes;
1 hour = flavor development period

Over the years, I have tasted many lentil casseroles and salads, including a Georgian lentil and walnut salad and lentil salads from North Africa, obviously influenced by the French. This recipe is different; it is French, decidedly French. A wonderful vegan recipe with a fresh taste that makes it welcome in the summer too, it is a recipe to which I turn often as a protein source.

- 2/3 cup dry, black Beluga lentils***
- 1 quart *boiling* water**

- 1 1/2 tablespoons SALAD BURNET AND SHALLOT
VINEGAR WITH PEPPER, red wine vinegar, *or*
other vinegar of choice****
- 1 1/2 teaspoons *Dijon* mustard with white wine**

- 2 tablespoons *extra virgin* olive oil**

- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme—*crushed***
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Pinch salt

- 2 cups *finely* chopped fresh parsley**
- 2 1/2 tablespoons *finely* chopped onion**

- 2 tablespoons chopped, *toasted* walnuts**



Pick over lentils and discard any of poor quality. Rinse thoroughly. Combine lentils and *boiling* water in a large *non-aluminum* kettle set over *MEDIUM* heat.*** Add water and allow to come to the boil. *Reduce heat to LOW*. Cook for about 30 minutes, or until lentils are soft and most of the water has been absorbed. Drain and plunge into ice water to stop further cooking. Drain thoroughly. Set aside until required.

In a large **non-aluminum** mixing bowl, combine vinegar and *Dijon*-style mustard. Using a wire whisk, combine thoroughly.

Gradually, while whisking, add the olive oil. Beat well to form an emulsion.

Add crushed thyme, black pepper, and salt. Combine thoroughly.

Add *finely* chopped parsley and onions. Using a wooden spoon, stir to combine.

Add well-drained lentils. Again, stir to combine. Turn into a serving bowl. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour for flavor development.

Top with *toasted* walnuts

Serve chilled.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *Black Beluga lentils are available from mail order firms. They are a treasure but if you can not find them, this recipe can be prepared with brown lentils.

**Salad burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*) is an easily grown herb of the rose family which has a fascinating cucumber taste, a beautiful fountain-like growing form, and graceful, serrated leaves. In dry, limestone soil and with full sun, it is an aggressive biennial which readily self-seeds. It actually does not do well in very rich soil and it does prefer low humidity. Pinch the flower heads which appear the second year to control its spreading and to prevent the leaves from becoming bitter. Encourage a new plant or two every few years since older plants do tend to become woody and lose their tender, fresh taste. Salad burnet is a wonderful addition to salads and cold drinks, greatly prized by Italian cooks who call it *pimpinella*. The vinegar referenced for this salad can be found on pp. 511-512 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*.



***Few of us still use aluminum cookware but if you still have an aluminum pan or mixing bowl around and are tempted to choose that pan to cook lentils or that bowl to mix this salad, *do not*. Aluminum discolors lentils rather unpleasantly.

This recipe can be halved, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 11.0 g.; FAT = 9.4 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 26.7 g.;
CALORIES = 204; CALORIES FROM FAT = 41%

BLACK BELUGA LENTILS AND ARTICHOKE HEARTS IN TOMATO – SAUSAGE SAUCE

TPT - 1 hour and 7 minutes

Sometimes I garnish a serving of French toast or pancakes with sour cream and a spoonful of the shiny black lentils, named for the Beluga caviar which they resemble. They are a favorite pulse not only because they are beautiful but also because they stay firm during cooking which makes these a perfect choice for salads, grain dishes, and skillet dishes such as this.



2 tablespoons dry black Beluga lentils—sorted and well-rinsed
1 cup boiling water
2 sprigs of celery tops

1 cup canned, diced tomatoes
2 tablespoon chopped, jarred, sun-dried tomatoes
1 vegetarian soy sausage with sage—sliced
1 tablespoon garlic oil*
1/4 teaspoon dried sage—crushed

1 cup frozen, quartered artichoke hearts
1/4 cup Chianti wine

In a non-aluminum saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine lentils, *boiling* water, and celery tops. Cook, stirring frequently, for about 25 minutes. **DO NOT BOIL HARD.** Drain. Remove and discard celery. Set aside until required.

Rinse the saucepan well. Combine tomatoes, sun-dried tomatoes, sausage slices, garlic oil, and crushed sage in the clean saucepan. Cook over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, stirring frequently, for about 15 minutes. Break up the sausage slices as you stir.

Add lentils, artichoke hearts, and wine. Continue cooking for about 20 minutes, or until heated through. Stir frequently. Turn into a heated serving bowl.

Serve at once.

Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2 people

Notes: *You will find a recipe to make garlic oil that can be safely stored in the refrigerator on p. 694 of volume II of *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul*.

This recipe can be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 11.0 g.; FAT = 6.7 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 14.5 g.;
CALORIES = 172; CALORIES FROM FAT = 35%

BLACK BELUGA LENTILS AND WILD RICE *PILAF*

TPT - 1 hour and 45 minutes;
30 minutes = grain soaking period

*In the Middle East lentils are routinely served with rice, reaffirming an almost instinctive complementation of amino acids I have mentioned often in my writing. Rather than using rice, I often use the seeds of the native North American aquatic grass *Zizania aquatica*, wild rice. Black Beluga lentils and wild rice combine to make a pilaf with a wonderfully deep, earthy flavor.*

1/4 cup dry wild rice*

1 teaspoon butter
3 tablespoons additive-free pecan halves

Bouquet garni:

Pinch dried thyme
1/2 bay leaf—broken
3 sprigs fresh parsley—chopped
3 or 4 fresh celery leaves—chopped

2 cups vegetarian stock of choice

1/4 cup dry black Beluga lentils—sorted and well-rinsed



1 tablespoon butter
1/4 teaspoon sweet marjoram leaves—crushed
Pinch poultry seasoning
Salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Wash wild rice in several changes of *cool* water. Soak washed grain in *cool* water to cover for 30 minutes. Discard any kernels which float to the surface. Again, drain. Rinse again in several changes of *cool* water. Drain thoroughly.

In a small skillet set over *LOW* heat, melt the 1 teaspoonful butter. Add pecan halves and gently sauté until pecans begin to color. Remove from heat and set aside until required.

Prepare a *bouquet garni* in a cheesecloth bag. In the bag, combine dried thyme, broken bay leaf, and chopped parsley and celery leaves. Tie tightly.

In a *non-aluminum* saucepan with cover set over *MEDIUM-HIGH* heat, bring the 2 cupfuls of stock to the boil with the *bouquet garni*. Stir in rinsed and drained wild rice. *Reduce heat to LOW*.

Add lentils. Cover tightly and cook *undisturbed* for about 45 minutes. *Add small amount of water if needed to prevent sticking*. Remove *bouquet garni* and discard.**

Add 1 tablespoonful butter, crushed marjoram, poultry seasoning, salt, and pepper. Stir to combine. Return to heat for several minutes, or until butter is melted and *pilaf* has heated through. Add sautéed pecan halves. Turn into heated serving bowl.

*Serve hot.****



Yields 4 servings
adequate for 2-3 people

Notes: *To release its perfection of flavor and texture, wild rice should *not* be cooked in the same manner as white and brown rices.

**The cheesecloth bag may be emptied, thoroughly washed and dried, and stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag to be reused when required again.

***When reheating leftovers, add vegetarian stock to prevent *pilaf* from sticking to the bottom of the saucepan. This recipe may be doubled, when required.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 11.4 g.; FAT = 9.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 15.0 g.;
CALORIES = 155; CALORIES FROM FAT = 54%

RAGOÛT OF LENTILS

TPT - 1 hour and 3 minutes

The earthy taste of these lentils and bacon are greatly complimented by the vegetable mirepoix, the hint of cardamom and cumin, and the fresh touch of thyme. The garlic oil really does not overwhelm. I like to serve this as a side with baked “fishless fish” fillets or soy grillers or even with boiled potatoes or sautéed polenta.

2 slices frozen soy bacon—diced
1 tablespoon garlic oil

2 tablespoons *finely* chopped celery
2 tablespoons *finely* chopped fennel
2 tablespoons *finely* chopped carrots
2 tablespoons *finely* chopped onion *or* shallot,
if preferred
1 garlic clove—*very finely* chopped

2 cardamom pods
Pinch ground cumin
1 teaspoon *finely* chopped fresh thyme leaves

1/2 cup black Beluga lentils—sorted and well-
rinsed

1 1/2 cups vegetarian stock of choice
1 1/2 teaspoons tomato paste

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

In a non-aluminum saucepan set over *MEDIUM* heat, combine diced soy bacon and garlic oil. Allow the bacon to fry, while stirring, for about 5 minutes. *Reduce heat to LOW*.

Add *finely* chopped celery, fennel, carrots, and onion, and *very finely* chopped garlic. Stir. Cover the *mirepoix* with a piece of parchment paper and cook until vegetables have been sweated and are soft, about 25 minutes. Remove and discard parchment. *Increase the heat to MEDIUM* once more.

Add whole cardamom pods, ground cumin, *finely* chopped fresh thyme. Stir for a minute or two.

Add lentils, stock, and tomato paste. Stir well. Cover and allow to cook for about 25 minutes, or until lentils are tender. *Add more water only if necessary*.

Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Remove and discard cardamom pods. Turn into a heated serving bowl.

Serve hot.

Yields 4 servings

Notes: This recipe can be doubled, when required.

Leftovers can be frozen.

1/4 SERVING – PROTEIN = 8.8 g.; FAT = 3.6 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 19.1 g.;
CALORIES = 144; CALORIES FROM FAT = 23%



*Winter menus can become humdrum with the same frozen vegetables
and the limited availability of fresh vegetables.
I have pulled some recipes for different vegetable sides from my files to share.
Please do drop by next month,*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.

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