

LENTIL FLAVOR DYNAMICS

Lentils have slightly peppery, nutty, and earthy flavor dynamics to them but overall have a very neutral flavor profile. This allows them to act like a flavor sponge, soaking up all of the complex flavors of a dish and carrying them to pack a big punch with the consumer. Consider layering cooking techniques, taste affinities, flavor contrasts, and global flavors to allow lentils to rise to their culinary potential.

Use this guide as inspiration to the versatility of lentils by combining flavors and textures in complementary and contrasting ways to create new food and menu offerings.



COOKING TECHNIQUES

Cooked, al dente

Bowls and salads, side dishes, meat blends, crumbles, soups and stews.

Cooked, pureed

Hummus, dips, spreads, pureed soups, meat emulsions, baking.

Cooked, roasted, or fried (crunchy & crispy)

Garnish toppers, granola and trail mixes, protein crusts, salad inclusions.

Cooked, pickled

Bowls and salads, salad bars.

TASTE AFFINITIES

Salty

- Bacon
- Flaky sea salt
- Feta cheese
- Fish sauce

Sweet

- Cinnamon
- Honey
- Maple syrup
- Fennel pollen
- Brown sugar
- White chocolate

Sour

- Lime juice
- Lemon juice
- Goat's cheese
- Yuzu

Bitter

- Extra virgin olive oil
- Dark chocolate
- Dark leafy greens
- Mustard seed
- Sesame

Umami

- Soy sauce
- Aged cheese
- Tuna
- Lamb
- Roasted garlic
- Sundried tomato

FLAVOR CONTRASTS

Fatty

- Avocado
- Pork belly
- Coconut

Herbaceous

- Fennel
- Cucumber
- Dill
- Parsley
- Oregano
- Extra virgin olive oil

Aromatic

- Kaffir lime
- Lemongrass
- Vanilla
- Almond extract
- Preserved lemon

Pungent

- Harissa
- Lemon
- Asafoetida
- Red onion
- Gochujang

Earthy

- Tahini
- Cumin
- Beet
- Pistachio

Fermented

- Kimchi
- Serrano ham
- Miso
- Hot sauce



Lentil Flavor Pairings by Regions of the World									
Category	Region								
	North America	Latin America	Caribbean	Africa	Middle East	Mediterranean	Europe	India	Asia
Spice	• Old Bay seasoning • Cajun seasoning • Celery seed	• Cumin • Dry chili pepper • Achioté paste • Tajín	• Allspice • Cloves • Cinnamon • Turmeric	• Berbere spice • Ras el Hanout • Caraway • Suya	• Sumac • Za’atar • Baharat	• Sumac • Paprika • Garlic • Nutmeg	• Fennel pollen • Smoked paprika • Ginger • Bay leaf	• Curry powder • Garam masala • Nigella seed • Cardamom • Mustard seed • Fennel seed • Cumin	• Star anise • Five spice • Furikake • Togarashi • Ginger
Herb	• Sage	• Cilantro • Epazote • Hoja Santa	• Marjoram	• Parsley • Cilantro • Mint	• Dill • Parsley • Mountain thyme	• Oregano • Basil • Rosemary • Thyme	• Basil • Tarragon • Rosemary • Thyme	• Curry leaves • Mint • Cilantro	• Shiso • Perilla • Garlic chive
Condiment, Sauce	• BBQ sauce • Maple syrup • Apple cider vinegar • Liquid smoke	• Mole • Salsa • Chimichurri	• Jerk • Molasses	• Harissa • Chermoula • Orange flower water • Rose water	• Tahini • Pomegranate molasses	• Tzatziki • Hummus • Pesto	• Balsamic vinegar • Dijon mustard • Black olives • Extra virgin olive oil • Almond extract	• Tamarind	• Ssamjang • Hoisin • Soy • Sesame oil • Rice vinegar • Mirin • Miso paste • Fish sauce
Nut, Seed	• Walnut • Sunflower seeds • Pine nut	• Cashew • Pepita	• Peanut	• Almond • Peanut • Sesame	• Pistachio • Pine nut • Almond	• Pine nut • Almond • Sesame	• Walnut	• Cashew	• Peanut • Sesame • Cashew
Produce	• Sweet potato • Corn	• Jicama • Corn • Avocado • Chili pepper	• Coconut • Mango • Plantain • Orange peel • Chili pepper	• Piri piri pepper • Preserved lemon • Red onion • Scotch bonnet	• Lemon • Cucumber • Onion • Greens	• Tomatoes • Cucumber • Lemon • Olive • Artichoke • Eggplant • Spinach	• Tomatoes • Arugula • Fennel • Kale • Roasted garlic	• Onion • Chili peppers • Tomato • Ginger • Turmeric	• Scallion • Watercress • Cabbage • Bok choy • Seaweed • Daikon • Edamame
Dairy	• Blue cheese • Mayonnaise • Cream • Jack cheese	• Cotija cheese • Sour cream • Queso fresco	• Evaporated milk • Queso blanco	• Labneh	• Feta • Myzithra • Yogurt	• Fresh mozzarella, burrata • Pecorino Romano • Ricotta • Feta • Yogurt • Haloumi	• Goat’s cheese • Crème fraîche	• Yogurt • Paneer • Ghee	• Spicy mayonnaise • Kewpie mayo
Protein	• Salmon • Beef • Chicken • Pork	• Pork • Shrimp • Ceviche • White fish	• Beef • Chicken • Lobster • Shrimp	• Lamb • Chicken • Cod	• Lamb • Shrimp • Fish roe	• Pulses • Seafood, fish	• Scallops • Oysters • Prosciutto • Serrano ham	• Pulses • Chicken • Lamb • Shrimp	• Beef • Pork • Shrimp • Chicken • Tuna