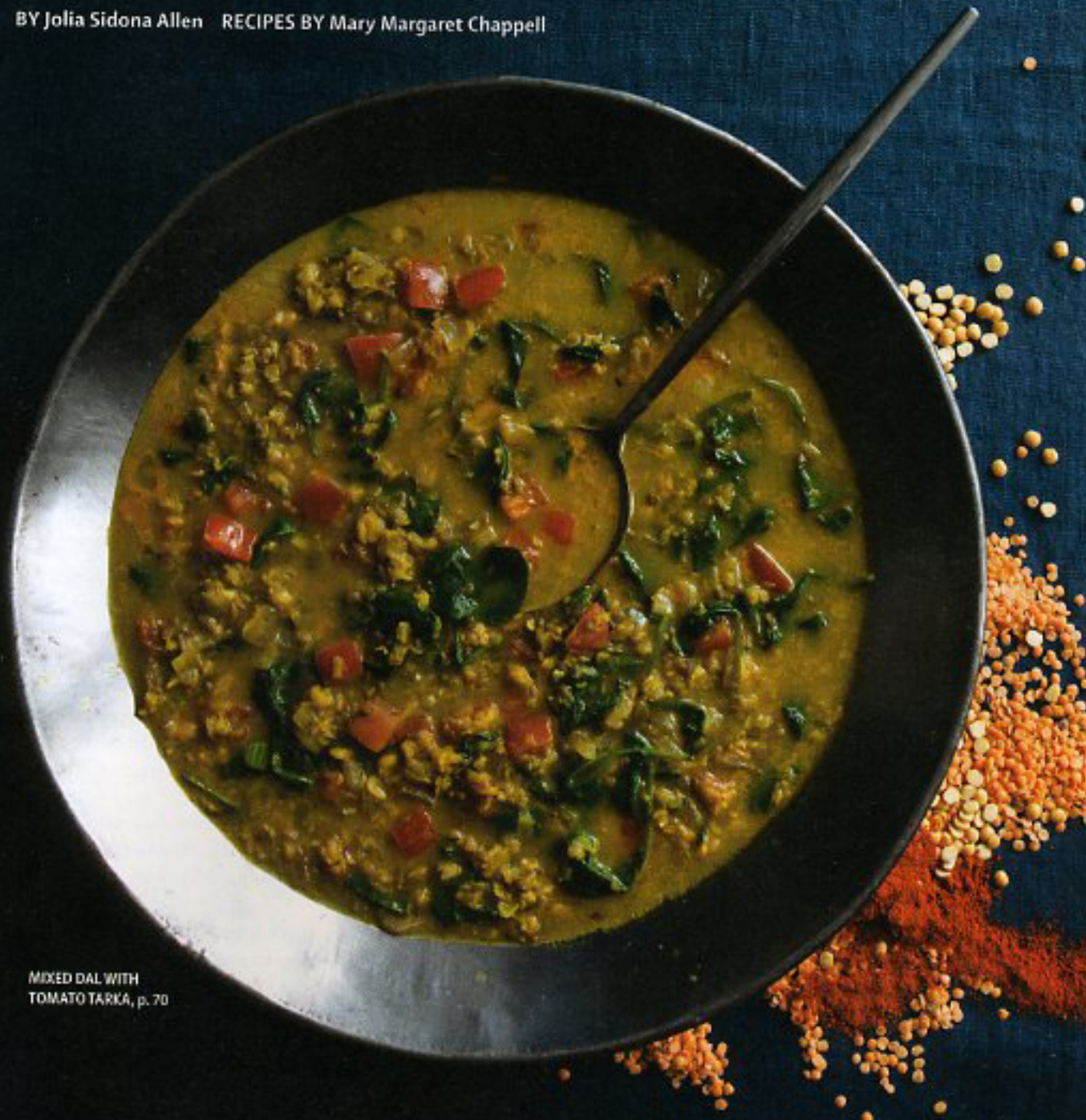


BULK BUYING 101

Shop smarter than ever with these essential dos and don'ts





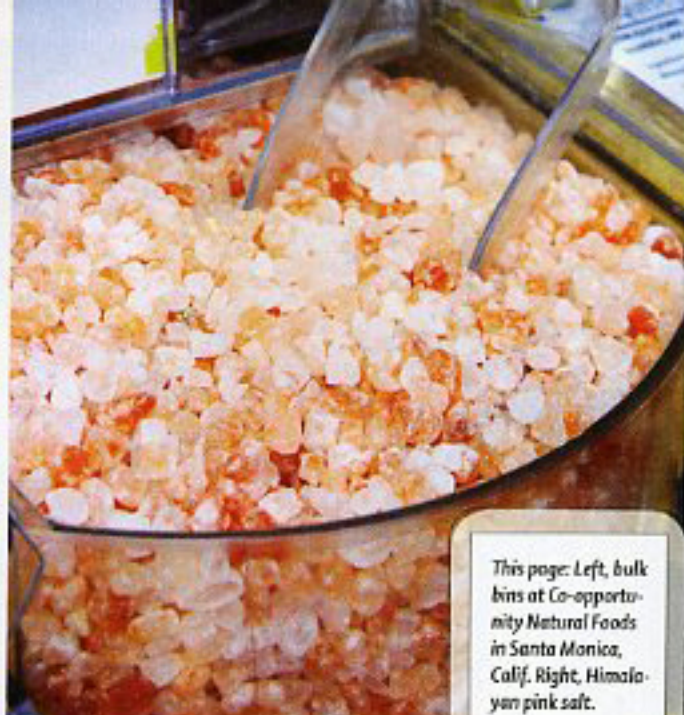
MIXED DAL WITH
TOMATO TARKA, p. 70

A revolutionary new grocery store recently opened shop in Austin, Tex.: In.gredients is the first modern-day package-free food market in the United States. Like so many of today's "progressive" food movements, the concept is really about getting back to a simpler way of doing things. "This is how people

bought groceries for a long time," says Brian Nunnery, In.gredients business development manager. "This is not a new thing, this is an old thing."

Luckily, you don't have to live near In.gredients to jump on the bulk foods bandwagon—bulk bins are a common fixture at food stores nationwide. Maybe you've already been poking around the bulk bins for years, harboring a hunch that buying in bulk pays off in more ways than one.

FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY Kate Sears
LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY Mario de Lopez



This page: Left, bulk bins at Co-opportunity Natural Foods in Santa Monica, Calif. Right, Himalayan pink salt.

Guess what? You were right. Bulk is better—better for your food budget, better for your creativity in the kitchen, and better for the planet too. Read on for six essential dos and don'ts to help you make the most of your next bulk foods shopping trip, plus four bulk-friendly recipes to inspire your cooking.

DO BUY ONLY AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE AS YOU NEED

According to Nunnery, the No. 1 benefit of buying in bulk is that you can buy exactly how much of a given ingredient you want: "You are in control of the quantity you buy. Quantities aren't dictated to you by the packaging." Sure, you can buy more, but you can also buy less. For example, you can buy the exact amount called for in a recipe.

TRY BUYING MORE Carolyn Scott-Hamilton, author of *The Healthy Voyager's Global Kitchen*, likes to stock up on healthful staples for everyday cooking. "I love using grains and legumes in my cooking," says Scott-Hamilton. "Cook once and eat thrice is my motto. I cook up a big pot of beans and a big pot of rice and use them throughout the week in different ways."

TRY BUYING LESS Buying less of an ingredient (think spices, dried mushrooms, nuts, etc.) can help stretch food dollars, cut down on waste, and keep the contents of your pantry fresher. "I don't want to buy an entire pound of cocoa powder if I just need 1 or 2 tablespoons for a recipe," says organic chef Ani Phyo, author of *Ani's 15-Day Fat Blast*. For Phyo, the freedom to buy less also makes it easy to kitchen-test substitutions. "It's a great way to try something without committing," she says.



Pencils and paper twist ties are provided for shoppers to secure produce bags and jot down bulk bin numbers.

DO BRING YOUR OWN CONTAINERS (IF ALLOWED)

"We encourage shoppers to bring their own containers," says Ricardo Chavira, marketing director of Co-opportunity Natural Foods in Santa Monica, Calif. "No bags are used, and we can easily weigh containers prior to them being filled. It's a win-win!" At In.gredients, shoppers even get the tare (empty weight) of their containers on a little sticker that can last for years.

If your local store doesn't let shoppers use their own containers, consider suggesting a policy change. "Maybe other grocery stores will do the same thing if customers just ask," says Nunnery.

As for travel-friendly containers, Scott-Hamilton says, "Invest in your own reusable bulk bags so you're not using plastic bags over and over." [Editor's pick: Chico Bag Produce Stand Complete Starter Kit; find it at chicobag.com.]

DO STOCK UP ON AIRTIGHT CONTAINERS

So how should you store bulk buys at home? VT food editor Mary Margaret Chappell favors 1 and 1½-quart canning jars: "I label them with masking tape and a Sharpie. There have been one too many times I've thought soy flour was chickpea flour or Arborio rice was sushi rice."

Not a fan of Mason jars? Any airtight containers will work. In the mood to purchase new containers? Scott-Hamilton highlights two useful features: easy to stack, and clear, so you can see ingredients.

DON'T IMPULSE SHOP

The sheer variety of bulk offerings can tempt even the most frugal shopper to impulse buy, which isn't the best tactic. "Meal planning is important. Go in with a plan of exactly what and how much you need so you're not stuck with stuff you never use," says Scott-Hamilton, who adds, "Don't shop hungry!"

DON'T CROSS-CONTAMINATE

When shopping in the bulk aisle, Nunnery stresses the importance of being sensitive to other people's allergies. "Always use the right scoop for the right bins," he says. On this topic, Chavira goes so far as to say that shoppers with a serious gluten intolerance should avoid the bulk bins altogether: "Don't assume something is gluten-free if it is in the bulk bins. If it is stored in a bulk bin around gluten products, it can become contaminated."

DON'T TOSS THE PLASTIC BAGS

Experiencing eco-guilt over using plastic bags for bulk ingredients? Rest assured that buying in bulk requires less packaging—and printing—than typical off-the-shelf products, even if you use plastic bags to transport your bulk buys home. Plus, the bags are recyclable and reusable. "You can always take them to the farmers' market," recommends Phyto.

Web extra: For five creative ways to reuse produce bags, visit vegetariantimes.com/producebags.



The bulk spice section at Co-opportunity Natural Foods in Santa Monica, Calif.

7-DAY BULK BUYING 101 CRASH COURSE

WEB EXTRA

vegetariantimes.com/blog

Join us on the Veg Daily Blog October 14–20 for a 7-Day Bulk Buying 101 Crash Course!

- Watch three Bulk Foods 101 videos starring Spork Foods sisters Heather Goldberg and Jenny Engel.
- Get a handy chart of shelf-life recommendations for bulk ingredients.
- Check out five creative reuse ideas for plastic produce bags.
- Get organic chef Ani Phyto's bulk-friendly fudge brownies recipe.

Mixed Dal with Tomato Tarka

Serves 8

Orange and yellow split peas and mung beans give this soup a lovely golden color.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried red lentils
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried split yellow or green peas
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried split mung beans
- 3 Tbs. melted butter, ghee, or vegetable oil, divided
- 2 Tbs. grated fresh ginger, divided
- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 4 cups baby spinach leaves (4 oz.)
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. whole cumin seeds
- 1 medium onion, chopped (1½ cups)
- 1 tsp. garam masala
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (1 Tbs.)

- 1 large tomato, diced
- Cilantro leaves for garnish, optional

1 | Rinse and drain lentils, split peas, and mung beans; place in large bowl, and cover with hot water. Soak 30 minutes. Drain.

2 | Combine drained lentil mixture, 1 Tbs. butter, 1 Tbs. ginger, turmeric, and 6 cups water in saucepan; bring to a boil. Cover, and simmer 1 hour, or until legumes are very soft. Whisk with wire whisk to break up lentils. Add spinach and salt, cover, and simmer 10 minutes more.

3 | Meanwhile, heat remaining 2 Tbs. butter in small skillet over medium heat. Add cumin seeds; cook 30 seconds to 1 minute, or until seeds darken. Add onion, garam masala, and cayenne, and cook 3 to 5 minutes, or until onions soften and