Lentils: history through a lens

1 **Read the article and complete it with the sentences below. Choose from sentences A – O which fit gaps 1-11. There are two extra sentences. The first one (0) is an example.**

The lowly lentil, a type of legume, has been sustaining man for **0.** ...P... . However, some once considered lentils as poor man's food and refused to eat them because they are so inexpensive. Although **1.** ....., lentils are very nutritious, filling, and more importantly, arguably, the most flavourful of all the legumes.

Lentils, botanically-known as *Lens culinaris esculenta,* grow in pods that **2.** ..... lentil seeds. Sometimes smaller **3.** ..... eraser, lentils can be round, oval, or heart-shaped disks. Known as *dal* or *dahl* in India, lentils are dried after harvesting and may be sold whole or split into halves, with the brown and green varieties being the best at retaining their shape after cooking. When halved, dried lentils resemble their split pea cousins.

Thought to have originated in the Near East or Mediterranean area, lentils have been a source of sustenance for our ancestors **4.** ..... They are the oldest pulse crop known to man and one of the earliest domesticated crops. The word *lentil* comes from the Latin *lens,* and indeed, this bean cousin is shaped like the double convex optic lens that **5.** .....

Lentil artifacts have been found on archeological digs on the banks of the Euphrates River dating back to 8,000 B.C. and there is evidence of the Egyptians, Romans, and Hebrews eating this legume. Lentils are also mentioned several times in the Bible; one example is in the book of Genesis and the story of Esau, who **6.** ..... a bowl of crimson lentils and a loaf of bread.

Depending on location, lentils were either considered a poor man's food or a delicacy for the upper class. While poor Catholics who could not afford fish during the season of Lent substituted lentils, lentils graced the tables of peasants and kings alike as **7.** ..... of protein. In Greece, this legume was left for the less fortunate while in Egypt it was fed to royalty.



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Today, however, lentils are a food for all, and have taken a prominent place among edible legumes, for both farmers as well as restaurant and home chefs. While other legumes have fallen off of menus, the lentil has risen in popularity. Agriculturally, lentils are a solid crop when drought is likely and the soil **8.** ..... In the kitchen, lentils are welcome for their ability to cook quickly, offer delicious flavour, and provide plenty of nutrients, such as protein, iron, and Vitamins A and B.

There are hundreds of varieties of lentils, with as many as 50 or more cultivated for food. They come in **9.** ....., brown, and green being the most popular. Lentils have an earthy, nutty flavor, and some varieties lend a slight peppery touch to the palate.



Lentils grow best in cool weather. If you are growing your own lentils, sow them in **10.** ..... the average last frost date. Most lentil production in North America takes place in the Pacific Northwest, Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho, and up into Western Canada, where it has been grown **11.** ..... with wheat.

A	since prehistoric times	
B	contain either one or two	
C	gave up his birthright for	
D	spring as early as 2 to 3 weeks before	
E	That is a very old question	
F	since the 1930s as a rotation crop	
G	a variety of colours, with red	
H	which were manufactured as early	
I	conditions are not favourable	
L	than the tip of a pencil	
M	took its name from the lentil	
N	they may be cheap	
O	a tasty and plentiful source	
P	thousands of years	0

2 Describe a legume typical of your region, focusing on:

- production area
- historical references
- production time (if it is a seasonal product)
- features (growing conditions, colour, taste, nutrients, etc.)
- Protected Designation of Origin (if any).

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