

Managing in Tough Times



BEANS: NUTRITIOUS, TASTY AND ECONOMICAL

Finding ways to stretch food dollars is important in tough economic times. One way to get the nutrition you and your family need without giving up taste, variety and time is to make beans a regular part of your meals.

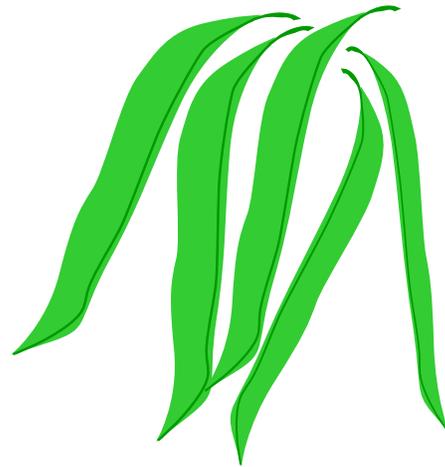
In Louisiana, red beans served over rice is a common dish served at home and is a regular menu item at many restaurants. White beans are often served as a side with jambalaya. There are, however, many other types of beans, such as lima beans, black beans, soybeans (also known as edamame in Asian cuisine), kidney beans, garbanzo beans (also known as chickpeas), navy beans and pinto beans to name a few.

Beans are easy to prepare, versatile and convenient. Dry beans take a while to cook when cooked on the stove but are easy to prepare in a slow cooker or pressure cooker. Canned or frozen beans usually only need to be heated on the stove or in the microwave before serving. They can be used in an endless variety of ways, such as in main dishes, soups, dips, salads, casseroles and as a side dish.

Beans and other legumes are some of the most widely available, inexpensive and nutritionally complete staple foods. They are an especially low-cost source of protein and can be stretched across many meals. The cost of a 15- to 16-ounce can of cooked beans ranges from about \$1 to \$1.50. Check out these conversions to see how far a bag or can of beans will go:

- One can provides about three one-half cup servings or enough beans for two main dishes.
- One pound (or 2 cups) of dry beans will give you 5 to 6 cups cooked beans.
- A 15 ½-ounce can (drained) will give you 1 2/3 cups of cooked beans.
- One pound of dry beans equals three 15 ½-ounce cans (drained).

Dry and canned beans need no refrigeration or peeling. According to the American Dry Bean Board, canned beans may be stored up to 12 months in the original, unopened can.



Dry beans can be cooked in large amounts and then frozen in meal-size portions for up to six months. Making meals ahead of time can save time on those days when you are rushed to get dinner on the table.

Beans can also help with weight management. They have a lower glycemic index, which means they have less impact on blood sugar levels. They are also high in fiber, which provides a sense of fullness that helps reduce feelings of hunger. Also, depending on the variety, a 1/2-cup serving of cooked dry beans weighs in at about 125 calories.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 and MyPlate consider beans to be a part of the protein and vegetable food groups because they contain nutrients found in both groups. Beans are a nutrient-rich source of complex carbohydrates and contain dietary fiber, proven to reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers. The American Cancer Society recommends eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day and also choosing beans as an alternative to meat. Beans contain folate, which helps protect against heart disease and stroke. Folate is also very important to pregnant women and their unborn babies. During pregnancy, women need more folate to help reduce the risk of birth defects in unborn babies in the first few weeks of their pregnancy. Beans are also a good source of potassium, which helps control blood pressure and iron. For your body to absorb the iron, eat foods rich in vitamin C with the beans. Foods rich in vitamin C are oranges and orange juice, tomato products, green peppers, cantaloupe, cabbage and broccoli.



The Dietary Guidelines emphasize the importance of beans in a healthful diet and recommend an adult intake of 3 cups of legumes such as beans each week. This amount is more than three times the amount adult Americans typically consume. Although children's suggested intake of beans varies with age, even at the lowest daily calorie intake (1,000 calories), guidelines include a half-cup of beans for a vegetable serving, plus 3 to 4 half-cup bean servings as a protein source per week.

"Beans, beans. . . ." Beans can cause intestinal gas in most people. You can cut down on gas by:

- Adding beans to your diet slowly over a three- to eight-week period. Once you are eating beans on a regular basis, you will have less of a problem with gas.
- Chewing the beans slowly helps digest them.
- Drinking plenty of water or other fluids to help your body handle the extra fiber from the beans and other strong-flavored vegetables.
- Soaking and cooking the beans using the "hot soak" method described below. This method gets rid of many of the gas-producing substances in beans.

COOKING DRY BEANS 101

Before dry beans can be used, they have to be plumped up with water. Several methods can be used to cook dry beans. Here are some tips on how to prepare them.

Cleaning. Before soaking beans, pick through them and remove any small rocks or dirt pieces. Put the beans in a strainer, sieve or colander. Rinse with cold water.

Hot soak. In a large pot, heat 10 cups of water to boiling for each pound of beans. Add dry beans; boil 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 4 hours or overnight (but not more than 16 hours). Do not remove the lid while

beans are soaking. This method will produce the tenderest beans. To cook beans in a hurry, start to cook the beans after 1 hour of soaking. When the beans have been soaked for 1 hour drain the water. Rinse both beans and pan with fresh water. Follow your recipe directions.

Traditional soak. Clean and rinse beans. Cover with three times as much water as beans (i.e., 1 cup beans to 3 cups water). Soak overnight. Drain and use as directed in recipe or cover with water and simmer about 1 to 2 ½ hours until tender.

Refrigerator soak. In a refrigerator container with a lid, add 3 cups of cold water to each cup of dry beans. Cover and refrigerate for one to three days.

Tender beans tips. Here are some points to remember to get the tenderest beans in the least amount of time:

- Add acidic ingredients, such as tomatoes, vinegar, ketchup, chili sauce, molasses or lemon juice after the beans are cooked to a tender stage. Add molasses before the beans are tender to keep them from softening even with a longer cooking time.
- Avoid adding baking soda to beans to help soften them. Baking soda will destroy the B-vitamin thiamin and may give the beans an off flavor. Use the hot soak method to soften the beans instead.
- Use a slow cooker or pressure cooker to save time when cooking dry beans. In a slow cooker, soaked beans will cook to soft within three to four hours and five to six hours for unsoaked beans on the HIGH setting. In a pressure cooker, beans will soften in about 22 to 25 minutes.

For recipes and more information on bean cookery, go to www.norharvestbean.org. Also, check out our Favorite Bean Soup and 4-Bean Chili recipes at https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/food_health/food/build-a-healthy-meal

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