

Appetite for Knowledge



BENEFICIAL BEANS

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 2-3 cups of legumes per week for health (most American adults eat less than 1 cup). Legumes include foods such as fresh peas and beans, soybeans, peanuts, and pulses. Pulses (what we commonly refer to as beans) include lentils, chickpeas, and dried peas and beans. These dry (or canned) beans are one simple, inexpensive, and tasty way to eat more legumes.

NUTRITION

Beans are a healthful source of carbohydrates, fiber, and plant protein and are naturally low in fat and sodium. In addition, beans contain a multitude of vitamins and minerals, including calcium, potassium, iron, and many of the B-vitamins! As with any fiber-rich food, beans should be slowly introduced in the diet, and accompanied by increased fluid intake. This will help to limit potential gastrointestinal side effects.

SO MANY USES

Beans have an uncommon culinary versatility - they are regularly found in dishes of all kinds: appetizers, breads, soups, side dishes, salads, main dishes, and even desserts! A number of methods can be used

to prepare beans - the method you choose will depend on the equipment you have available, time available for preparation, and - most importantly - your preferences for flavor and texture in the bean dishes you enjoy!



SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

Preparing dry beans from scratch can be intimidating for some. To ensure your success, here are the basics for a few of the more common methods:

- **Long soak:** cover beans with room temperature water and soak for 8-12 hours or overnight. Be sure to use enough water! Drain soak water and refill with fresh water. Cook until tender – 1 hour or so.
- **Quick soak:** bring the beans and water to a boil then remove from heat and let stand for 1 hour. Drain soak water and refill with fresh water. Cook until tender – 1-2 hours.
- **No-soak:** double the amount of cooking water needed for pre-soaked beans. This requires more energy from your stove – cooking may take 2-4 hours.
- **Pressure cook:** follow instructions from your pressure cooker or trusted recipe. Most beans can be cooked in 5-10 minutes at 15 PSI.
- **Already cooked:** Canned beans have already been cooked and are a great

choice when you need to get food on the table quickly. Look for low- or no-salt-added varieties or consider rinsing the beans to remove some of the sodium in the full-salt canned versions.

Soaking and cooking times can vary quite a bit depending on bean type and age, as well as elevation – so plan ahead! You can typically expect one pound (2 cups) of dry beans to yield 5-6 cups once cooked, though variety will certainly affect this as well. It is a good idea to rinse and sort through beans ahead of time and remove anything that doesn't look good.

Beans and other legumes have long been a dietary staple for many cultures—dating as far back as 20,000 years! These ancient cultures knew that beans were easily cultivated and sustained life. Beans are still recognized today for their many health-promoting properties and low cost. If you are working to eat more healthfully and spend less, be sure to take a closer look at the value and versatility of the bean.



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