

Food Bytes

HEALTH & NUTRITION PROGRAM, SNAP EDUCATION



Benefits of Beans, Peas & Lentils

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Legumes — a class of vegetables that includes beans, peas and lentils — are among the most versatile and nutritious foods available.

What are some common legumes?

- Black beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- Kidney beans
- Pinto beans
- Navy beans
- Lentils
- Split peas (green or yellow)
- Soybeans
- Lima beans

2 cups of dry beans = 4 to 5 cups of cooked beans

Soaking methods:

The three different soaking methods vary in the amount of time required for adequate soaking. The “hot soak” method typically is recommended because it reduces cooking time and gas-producing compounds the most while consistently yielding tender beans.

First, inspect the dry beans, removing any broken beans or foreign material. Rinse the beans thoroughly in cold water. Next, prepare the beans using one of the “soak” methods. Finally, drain and rinse soaked beans. Cook and use in recipes.

Traditional Soak	Hot Soak (preferred)	Quick Soak
1. Pour cold water over beans to cover	1. Place beans in a large pot and add 10 cups of water for every 2 cups of beans	1. Place beans in a large pot and add 6 cups of water for every 2 cups of beans
2. Soak beans for eight hours or overnight	2. Heat to boiling and boil for an additional 2 to 3 minutes	2. Bring to boil and boil for an additional 2 to 3 minutes
3. Drain beans and discard soak water	3. Remove beans from heat, cover and let stand for 4 to 24 hours	3. Remove beans from heat, cover and let stand for 1 hour
4. Rinse beans with fresh, cool water	4. Drain beans and discard soak water	4. Drain beans and discard soak water
	5. Rinse beans with fresh, cool water	5. Rinse beans with fresh, cool water
Advantages: No boiling required; reduces gas-producing compounds with long soak	Advantages: Reduces cooking time and gas-producing compounds; consistently yields tender beans	Advantages: Much faster soaking time, requiring less planning
Disadvantages: Long soaking time, requiring planning ahead of time	Disadvantages: Long soaking time, requiring some planning	Disadvantages: Fermentation may take place if left in hot water for too long; potential loss of some folate



Tips for Cooking Beans

- Maintain water at a gentle simmer
- Stir beans occasionally to prevent sticking
- Keep beans covered with water during cooking process—add cold water as needed
- Drain beans immediately after reaching desired texture.

Tips for Using Beans

- Rinse canned beans to reduce sodium content
- Add acidic ingredients (lemon juice, vinegar, ketchup, molasses) or salt to recipes after beans are fully cooked

Beans on the Menu

- Top your salads with canned or cooked beans to add protein
- Hummus is great on sandwiches as a spread or as a dip for veggies
- Add beans to pasta dishes, soups, salsa, rice, or burgers for added nutrition and color
- Add pureed beans to soup in place of cream

Great nutritional value

- Low in fat
- No cholesterol
- Good source of fiber
- High in folate
- High in iron
- Good source of protein

Great cost value

- Cheaper than meat or fish
- Cheaper than dairy
- Cheaper than nuts

Possible health benefits

Decreased risk of:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Diabetes

Source: All About Beans, NDSU Extension Service

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