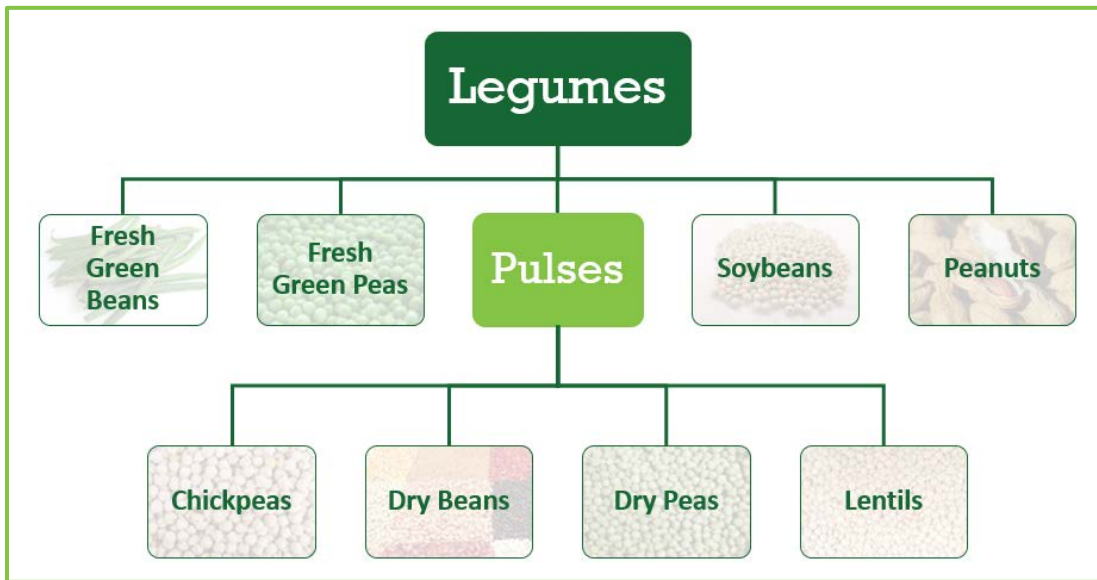


What are Beans?

Beans are edible seeds that are part of a larger family of crops called legumes. Legumes are plants that grow in pods. They are a good source of protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals and they are naturally low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Legumes are found in the [MyPlate](#) Protein **and** Vegetable food groups.



What are Pulses?

Pulses are a type of legume. Pulses are the **dry, edible** seeds inside of the pods. Unlike other legumes, pulses are harvested when they are dry instead of when they are green. There are 11 different types of pulses. The most common types are:

- **Dry Beans:** Fresh beans and soybeans are not pulses. Some examples of dry beans are black beans, navy beans, kidney beans, lima beans, mung beans, pinto beans, and great northern beans.
- **Chickpeas:** Chickpeas are also called garbanzo beans. Chickpeas also come in two different sizes, Desi (smaller) and Kabuli (bigger).
- **Dry Peas:** Fresh peas are not pulses, but dry peas are considered pulses. Some varieties of dry peas are black-eyed peas, split yellow or green peas, and whole yellow or green peas.
- **Lentils:** Lentils are usually smaller and flatter in shape than dry beans. There are a variety of different lentils. Some examples are green, red, and brown.

While knowing the difference between legumes and pulses is important, this toolkit will mostly refer to all legumes and pulses as “beans.”



The Nutrition Benefits of Beans

Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are packed with nutrients that are important for maintaining a healthy diet that can reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases. Check out the nutritional benefits of adding beans to your next meal!

Protein

Proteins are the building blocks for many parts of our body including our organs, muscles, hair, nails, and skin. Beans are found in the MyPlate protein group and are classified as a plant-based protein. They contain a similar amount of protein per serving as other foods in the MyPlate protein group such as meat, poultry, and fish. People who limit the amount of meat, poultry, and fish they consume, such as vegetarians and vegans, may use beans as a major source of protein in their diet.

Fat

Beans are naturally low in fat and because they are a plant-based protein, they do not have any cholesterol or trans fat. Fat provides more than double the amount of calories per gram than protein, so eating beans in place of other foods high in fat may help to reduce the amount of calories eaten overall.

Fiber

Fiber is found in all foods that come from plants, including beans, peas, and lentils. The body is not able to digest or absorb fiber to the same way as protein, carbohydrates, and fat. Fiber is found in two forms: soluble fiber and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber breaks down in water to create a gel-like material that may help to lower cholesterol and blood glucose levels. Beans, oats, fruits, and vegetables all have soluble fiber. Insoluble fiber does not break down in water but instead promotes digestion by increasing the movement of “bulk waste” out of the body’s digestive system. Insoluble fiber helps to reduce constipation and is found in beans as well as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole-grain products. Foods that are high in fiber, like beans, also make you feel full for a longer time.

Vitamins and Minerals

Beans are rich in many vitamins and minerals such as B vitamins, potassium, iron, and magnesium. B Vitamins such as folic acid, riboflavin and Vitamin B6 are important for maintaining normal cell growth and energy production. Potassium helps maintain a healthy blood pressure and iron is necessary for carrying oxygen to the cells in your body. Magnesium is needed for many functions in the body and can help to regulate nerve function, blood sugar levels, and making protein, bone, and DNA.

Beans pack a powerful punch and are filled with nutrients that are important for maintaining proper growth and development. Reach for beans the next time you want to add a nutrient powerhouse to your next meal!

Cooking With Beans: Soaking Dry Beans

Whether you are using canned or dry beans, cooking with beans can be simple! Beans can be added to soups, stews, salads, dips, and even dessert. Dry beans are not cooked and need to be cleaned and soaked before adding to a recipe, while canned beans can be used immediately (see page 4 for more information). Read below to learn more about how to soak dry beans for cooking.

Why Should I Soak My Dry Beans?

1. Reduce Cooking Time

Soaked beans cook faster. As beans soak, they absorb water. The water inside the beans helps the inside and outside of the bean to be evenly cooked. Soaked beans are more likely to hold their shapes because they do not need to be cooked as long as beans that were not soaked.

2. Reduce Digestive Issues

Beans contain fibers known as oligosaccharides. Our bodies do not easily digest oligosaccharides which may cause digestive issues such as gas and bloating. As you soak your beans, some oligosaccharides are released into the water making them less likely to cause gas.

Which Beans Should I Soak?

- All dry beans and chickpeas should be soaked before cooking.
- Dry peas and lentils are smaller so they do **NOT** need to be soaked before cooking.
- Canned beans, peas, and lentils do **NOT** need to be soaked before cooking.

How Should I Soak My Beans?

Soaking Methods			
	Hot Soak*	Quick Soak*	Traditional Soak*
	<i>Recommended</i>	<i>Fastest</i>	<i>Easiest</i>
Step 1	Place beans in a large pot and add 10 cups of water for every 2 cups of dry beans.	Place beans in a large pot and add 6 cups of water for every 2 cups of beans.	Place the beans in a large pot and add enough water to cover the beans.
Step 2	Heat to boiling and boil for an additional 2-3 minutes.	Heat to boiling and boil for an additional 2-3 minutes.	Soak for 8 hours or overnight.
Step 3	Remove beans from heat, cover and let stand for 4-24 hours .	Remove beans from heat, cover, and let stand for 1 hour .	
Step 4	Drain beans and discard soaking water.	Drain beans and discard soaking water.	Drain beans and discard soaking water.
Step 5	Rinse beans with fresh, cool water before cooking.	Rinse beans with fresh, cool water before cooking.	Rinse beans with fresh, cool water before cooking.

* Beans will absorb water while soaking, so be sure to use a large pot with plenty of extra room to allow them to expand.



Cooking with Beans: Techniques and Methods

Beans are versatile and can be used in many types of recipes including soups, stews, salads, dips, and even desserts! There are several basic cooking techniques and methods that are simple and can be used to prepare beans for your next meal.

Boiling

This technique is best for dry beans and lentils. After soaking dry beans (see page 5), or rinsing lentils, they can be put in a large pot with water over medium-high heat. When the beans or lentils come to a boil, cover the pan and lower the heat. Check out the cooking times in the table to the right for the dry beans and lentils offered through USDA Foods. Cooking times show the amount of time that is needed to cook the beans after they have been soaked.

Type of Dry Bean/Lentils	Cooking Time
Baby lima beans	90 – 120 minutes
Black-eyed peas	60 – 90 minutes
Great Northern beans	45 – 60 minutes
Kidney beans	90 – 120 minutes
Lentils	20 – 30 minutes
Pinto beans	90 – 120 minutes

Heating/Warming

Canned beans: Since canned beans and chickpeas are already cooked, they can be used straight from the can. Heat/warm canned beans and chickpeas in a saucepan over medium-low heat until warm. Remove from heat and use as desired.

Tips: Remember to drain any excess liquid before adding to a recipe. If using in a cold recipe, such as a salad, canned beans and chickpeas do not need to be heated or warmed.

Dry beans and lentils: Dry beans and lentils need to be fully cooked before they can be heated or warmed. Once they are fully cooked, they can be stored in a sealed container in the refrigerator. When they are ready to be used, put fully cooked dry beans and lentils in a saucepan and heat until warm.

Mashing

This technique is great for adding beans to a dip or dessert. Mash cooked dry beans or canned beans in a bowl with a fork or potato masher to the desired consistency. Beans can also be pureed in a blender for a smoother texture. Just add a little liquid such as oil, the liquid from the canned beans, or water to help with the process.

Roasting

This is a great method if you want to add even more flavor to your meals. Rinse and drain canned beans or cooked dry beans. Spray a sheet pan with cooking spray and spread the drained beans, lentils, or chickpeas evenly across the pan. Spray the beans with cooking spray or mix with a tablespoon of your favorite cooking oil. Sprinkle your favorite seasonings on top of the beans and bake in the oven for 45 minutes at 350 degrees F until crispy. Toss the beans every 15-20 to make sure the beans are evenly roasted. They can be added to a salad to replace croutons or eaten as a snack!

Tips: Remove as much liquid as possible from the beans before roasting them in the oven. Dry beans must be cooked and chilled before they can be roasted in the oven.



Cooking with Beans: Using Beans in Everyday Recipes

Beans come in many different shapes, sizes, forms, and flavors. Beans are more popular in certain cuisines than in others, but they can be included in a variety of recipes you may already prepare at home. This handout will provide an overview of how beans can fit into meals you may already be familiar with.

When cooking with beans, it is important to have a sense of how much you will need for a specific recipe. Dry beans and lentils expand when they cook, so there are more servings per cup than canned beans. Canned beans are already cooked and packed in liquid, which usually needs to be drained before using. Read the recipe carefully to find out how many cups of beans you need and adjust as needed for dry or canned beans. The chart below provides an overview of the approximate yield of beans in various forms:

Form	Yield
Dry beans, one pound	= 2 cups dry beans
Dry beans, one pound	= 6 cups cooked beans, drained
Dry beans, one cup	= 3 cups cooked beans, drained
Cooked beans, drained, ½ cup	= 1 serving (based on MyPlate recommendations)
Canned beans, 15 ounces	= 1.75 cups, drained
Canned beans, 15 ounces	= 3.5 servings (based on MyPlate recommendations)

Soups and Stews

Soups and stews are some of the easiest ways to add more beans to your diet. Great northern beans have a mild taste and can be added to a homemade chicken vegetable soup. Kidney beans have a firm texture and they add a pop of color to any stew or chili. While both dry beans and canned beans can be used, dry beans will need to be soaked before adding to a soup or stew (page 5). Need a new soup idea? Try out the Chickpea Corn Chowder (page 14) or the Three-Bean Minestrone (page 18).

Salads

Add more protein to your salad by using beans! Give your salad a southwest flair by using black beans with corn, peppers, and tortilla strips. Chickpeas can give your salad a Mediterranean feel along with olives, red onions, and romaine lettuce. Roast beans to add a nice crunch to your next salad. Don't have leafy greens to make a salad? Try the Marinated Three Bean Salad recipe (page 17)!

Dips

Dips are great as an appetizer at a party or as a quick snack with your lunch. Chickpeas, also known as garbanzo beans, can be used to make hummus, a traditional Mediterranean dip. Dip cut-up vegetables like carrots or celery into hummus for a protein-packed snack. Pinto beans and black beans also make great dips. Pureed or mashed pinto or black beans make a great refried bean dip or spread for a quesadilla or 7-layer dip. These bean dips can also be used in place of other condiments on a sandwich. Spread hummus or another bean mash on your sandwich to add more protein and fiber!

Desserts

Believe it or not, beans can be used for dessert too! Some beans like black beans, lentils, and Great Northern beans have a mild flavor. This means when used in recipes, they take on the flavor of other ingredients that have a stronger flavor profile. Add mashed cooked black beans or lentils to your brownie recipe or add them to your morning smoothie for a natural boost of protein.

Cooking With Beans: Getting Creative with Beans

Beans are commonly found in soups, stews, salads, and dips. Their mild flavors make them such a versatile ingredient that they can be added to recipes you may have never even thought about. If you want to try something new and get creative with beans, try adding them to your breakfast, sandwiches, and desserts. Below are a few creative ways to use beans:

Beans for Breakfast

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Adding foods high in protein such as beans will help you get the nutrients you need to power through your day. Try some of these simple tips to add beans to your breakfast:

- **Oatmeal:** Cook lentils with oatmeal to make a filling breakfast. Both oats and beans are loaded with fiber to help you feel fuller longer. Top it with fruit to add more nutrients and a little bit of sweetness.
- **Eggs and Beans:** Eggs are an excellent source of protein. Add a ¼ cup of cooked pinto or black beans to an omelet for a protein-packed breakfast.
- **Pancakes:** Mash cooked beans into your pancake batter to add some protein and fiber to a classic breakfast.
- **Quesadillas & Burritos:** Add any type of bean to a breakfast burrito or quesadilla. After adding beans, fill the burrito or quesadilla with low-fat cheese and veggies for an easy, on-the-go breakfast option.
- **Smoothies:** Blend cooked beans with fruits and vegetables for a healthy breakfast smoothie filled with vitamins and minerals.
- **Baked Goods:** Bake cooked, mashed beans into a breakfast bread or breakfast muffins for a hearty morning grain. Try adding ½ cup of mashed great northern beans to banana bread or ½ cup of mashed black beans to blueberry muffins. Baking uses exact measures, therefore, you may need to experiment by altering other ingredients to get the desired product.

Beans for a Snack

Healthy snacks can fill you up until your next meal. Try some of these simple tips to add beans to your snacks:

- **Chocolate Bean Bark:** Canned beans or chickpeas can be coated in melted chocolate and put into the freezer to set. After the chocolate sets, pieces can be broken off for crunchy, chocolate bark snacks.
- **Snack Mix:** Trail mix or snack mix is usually full of nuts, dried fruit, seeds, and pretzels. Add some roasted beans for an extra boost of folate, iron, and potassium.
- **Salsa:** Salsa and chips are a party favorite. Add cooked beans to salsa for a quick, hearty, satisfying dip.
- **Seasoned:** On their own, canned beans and dried peas can be seasoned and roasted to make an easy, low fat, crunchy snack. You can use salt and pepper, dried herbs, cheese, maple syrup, or even spicy pepper flakes to customize your beans any way you like!