

Nutrition and Cooking of Dry Beans

Beans are nutrient-dense foods and the richest source of protein we can find in the plant world. Being legumes, they are able to fix nitrogen from the air and store it in their seeds, the beans. Nitrogen is a building block of protein. Meals that combine beans with other whole grains such as rice and corn can supply our bodies with all of the essential amino acids, forming a complete protein source. In many parts of the world, these legume/grain combinations provide a substantial proportion of the population's dietary protein.

Beans are an excellent source of vitamins and minerals. They are rich in B vitamins as well as the minerals copper, phosphorus, manganese and magnesium. Although iron content varies from one bean variety to another, most are rich sources of iron. Beans also contain both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.

Traditional societies whose cuisines are based on legumes prepare them with great care, soaking them, rinsing them, and skimming off foam during cooking. These steps neutralize phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors on the surface of the beans and break down difficult-to-digest complex sugars, rendering the beans easier to digest and their nutrients easier to assimilate.

Beans cooking preparation to maximize flavor, digestibility, and assimilation of nutrients:

1. In a pot, wash the beans several times, swishing them in clean water each time.
2. Fill the pot with cold water and let it sit for at least half an hour. This hydrates the skins so they won't split during cooking.
3. Drain and refill with fresh water.
4. Stir occasionally so that the beans at the bottom get enough oxygen to stay alive.
5. Replace the water after 4 or 5 hours.
6. Soak overnight. All beans should be plumped out before cooking.
7. Pour off the water, rinse, and add fresh water before starting to cook.
8. Bring to a boil and skim off the foam*
9. Reduce the heat. Add garlic and other seasonings.
10. Simmer until cooked.
11. Don't add salt, vinegar or tomato until later, as they prevent the beans from softening.

*Some people bring the beans almost to a boil and then pour off the water, put in new water, and resume cooking. This is to reduce the flatulence of the beans.

References: [Nourishing Traditions](#), by Sally Fallon; [The Resilient Gardener](#), by Carol Deppe; [The Rancho Gordo Heirloom Bean Grower's Guide](#), by Steve Sando; "The Nutritional Value of Dry Beans" by Susan Raatz, the Bean Institute

For more reading:

Cooking with beans

http://www.bonappetit.com/test-kitchen/primers/article/how-to-cook-with-beans?mbid=social_facebook

Pulses – aka dried beans, lentils, peas and chickpeas are climate change-fighting super crops that provide people with an inexpensive and sustainable source of delicious protein. To help promote these amazing plants and their benefits for our health and environment, the UN declared 2016 to be the International Year of Pulses (IYP).

<http://gracelinks.org/blog/6566/can-dried-beans-help-save-the-world>