

## *Food from the Field*

Dry beans come in an exciting variety of colors, shapes, sizes, and flavors. Pacific Northwest-grown beans offer freshness, great taste, diversity, and many health benefits.

### *Selecting Dry Beans*

- Select pods that look full and plump, but are thoroughly dried.
- Remove beans from pod to cook or store.
- Remove any rocks or foreign matter.
- Do not eat raw beans.

### *Storage*

- Store dry beans in a sealed container in a cool, dry place for 6-12 months.
- Cooked beans can be refrigerated in their cooking water for 3-5 days.
- Cook more than you need then store for up to 6 months in the freezer.

### *Cooking*

Beans triple in size, so start with a large pot. Wash, soak (see next column), and rinse the beans, then add fresh water. Use 10 cups water for every 2 cups of dry beans—don't skimp—they need water to absorb as well as water to cook in. Boil for 10 minutes then simmer for 1 to 2 hours, until tender. Simmer gently to prevent split skins. Add a tablespoon of oil to prevent foaming. Taste-test for doneness—beans should be tender but not mushy. Never add salt or acid ingredients (wine, tomatoes, vinegar, or citrus juice) until beans are tender, or else they will not fully tenderize. Add herbs and spices anytime.

Cool beans in cooking liquid to keep them from drying out. When reheating cooked beans, add a tablespoon or two of water if necessary to moisten.

## *Using Dry Beans*

The adaptable bean adds great flavor and texture to soups, salads, main dishes and even desserts.

- Add beans to your favorite spaghetti sauce.
- Use beans with corn or flour tortillas—in burritos, enchiladas, tacos and wraps.
- Use cooked beans to add texture and give a protein boost to salad or mixed vegetables.

### *Quieting the Musical Fruit (Soaking!)*

Beans are full of starch—including some that do not digest easily. Digesting this starch can produce gas, giving rise to the rhyme “Beans, beans, the musical fruit...” There are several ways to quiet this “music” so you can enjoy the health benefits of beans.

- *Gradually* increase the amount of beans you eat, so your digestive system can adjust.
- Soak beans overnight then discard the soaking water. Some, but not all, of the hard-to-digest carbohydrates dissolve into the water and are then poured off.
- This “quick” method also helps reduce gas: Cover beans with water. Bring to a boil for 2-3 minutes. Let set at least one hour, but preferably four hours. The longer beans soak, the more gas-causing substances are removed.
- Try “Beano,” a product found in the pharmacy section or on the bean aisle of the grocery store. Its natural enzymes help digest gas-producing carbohydrates.
- Soaking also shortens cooking time, which saves energy!

#### Bean Arithmetic

1 pound = 2 cups dry beans = 6 cups cooked

## *Why Should We Eat Dry Beans?*

- They **taste great** and are very versatile!
- When eaten along with grain foods, beans form a good quality **whole protein**, low in fat with no cholesterol.
- **Fiber-rich** dry beans
  - Help your colon stay healthy.
  - Lower blood cholesterol levels.
- Colorful bean skins contain **flavonoids**, which are powerful antioxidants. Antioxidants are currently being researched for the role they may play in preventing cancer and heart disease.
- **Lignan**, a substance in beans, forms phytoestrogens during digestion. Phytoestrogens may help prevent breast cancer in premenopausal women and prostate cancer in men. They may also lessen the risk of osteoporosis and heart disease in postmenopausal women. The research is still underway.
- Beans contain minerals, notably **calcium**, **potassium** and **iron**. A half-cup of cooked beans provides 16-64 milligrams (mg) of calcium, depending on the variety of bean (adults need about 1000 mg/day). Heart-healthy potassium weighs in at about 500 mg per ½ cup (3500 mg/day is recommended). The same ½ cup provides 2 mg of iron (the 2001 RDA for iron ranges from 8 to 18 mg for adults).
- **Folate** is a **B-vitamin** that helps fight heart disease and prevent certain birth defects. One-half cup of most varieties of cooked beans supplies about 25% of the adult RDA for this vitamin. Beans contain good amounts of other B-vitamins too, such as **thiamin**.

### *Enjoying Dry Beans*

Try this traditional favorite as a delicious introduction to dry beans—your family will ask for more!

#### *South of the Border Pizza*

1 10-ounce can refrigerated pizza crust  
2 cups cooked beans, preferably pinto or black  
½ cup prepared salsa  
1 small onion, thinly sliced  
3 to 4 slices bacon (or vegetarian bacon), cooked and crumbled  
1 cup reduced-fat cheddar cheese, grated  
1 cup reduced-fat Monterey Jack cheese, grated

- Heat oven to 425° F with rack in lowest position.
- Place beans in mixing bowl. Mix gently with salsa. Set aside.
- Grease a 12-inch pizza pan or 13x9 inch pan. Unroll dough and place in greased pan. Starting at center, press dough out with hands.
- Spread bean mixture evenly on crust. Top with sliced onion, bacon and cheese.
- Bake for 5 to 8 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

#### **For more bean recipes:**

American Bean Board, [www.americanbean.org](http://www.americanbean.org)  
Idaho Bean Commission, [www2.state.id.us/bean](http://www2.state.id.us/bean)  
*The Instant Bean* by Sally and Martin Stone,  
Bantam Books, New York, 1996.  
Most vegetarian cookbooks have entire sections devoted to dry beans.

### *Food From the Field*

Local farmers provide fresh foods for your table. Buying local produce not only gives you fresh, nutritious food, but also enhances your community in these ways:

- Keeps small farmers in business and supports the local economy.
- Preserves farmland and open space in your area.
- Conserves natural resources—less fuel used in transportation and packaging.
- Preserves the environment with responsible use of water, fewer farm chemicals, and less air pollution.

If these things are important to you, visit a farmers' market weekly during the growing season and look for local produce at your grocery store. Make a difference with your food dollars!

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# *Dry Beans*

*Bountiful, delicious, and an  
inexpensive source of  
protein*

*Food from the Field Series*



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