

# Strengthening Families

Cumberland County Center

January, February and March 2015

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## Magical Beans

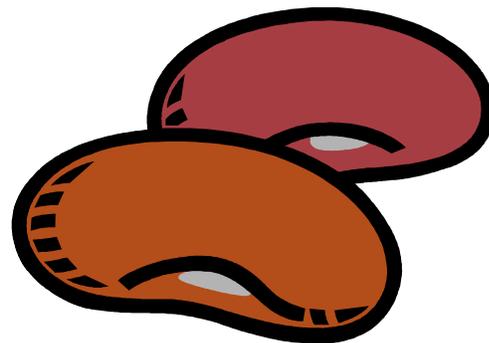
Many have heard the popular tune of “beans, beans, a magical fruit, the more you eat the more you...”, well you know the rest. Although beans are not a fruit, they may be magical because they fit under two food groups. They are found under the vegetable and meat groups because they are packed with vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber.

### Bean Benefits & Tips for Eating Them

- **Healthy weight.** Beans are low in fat and calories and high in dietary fiber and protein. The fiber in beans provides a sense of fullness that helps keep food cravings down. Depending on variety, a half cup of cooked dry beans is only 120 calories.
- **Chronic disease.** Because of their high fiber, low glycemic index, and high nutrient content, eating beans may help reduce the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some cancers.
- **Recommendations.** Research shows that eating a half cup of beans several times a week, within a well-balanced diet, has resulted in reduced risk of heart disease. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines recommends eating three (3) cups of legumes a week for a 2,000-calorie diet.

- **Popular uses.** Navy beans are great for soups, stews, or baked beans. Kidney beans are used in chili and three-bean salads. Pinto beans are used refried in stews and dips. Great northern beans and lentils are used in soups and stews. Garbonzo beans are used in salads and hummus.
- **Minimizing the “musical fruit” effect.** Discard the soaking water when making dry beans from scratch and rinse beans thoroughly before cooking, gradually increase the amount and frequency of beans, try over the counter products with an enzyme that breaks down gas-producing substances, and drink plenty of fluids.

Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension



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## How Do Canned Beans Compare to Dry-Packaged Beans?



Canned beans are convenient since they don't have to be presoaked and cooked. They can be eaten straight from the can or heated in recipes. According to the American Dry Bean Board, one 15-ounce can of beans equals one and one-half cups of cooked dry beans, drained. For most recipes, one form of beans can be substituted for the other.

Unless canned without salt, precooked canned beans generally are higher in sodium than dry-packaged beans. Always thoroughly drain and rinse canned beans in a colander or strainer under cold running water before using them in a recipe. This may help lower the amount of any added salt and may help remove some to their potential gas-producing properties.

Transfer any unused beans from the can and store in a covered container in the refrigerator; use within three days or freeze and use within six months. If beans have been combined with other ingredients in a recipe, use them within two (2) days for best quality and safety, or freeze for later use.

**Source:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

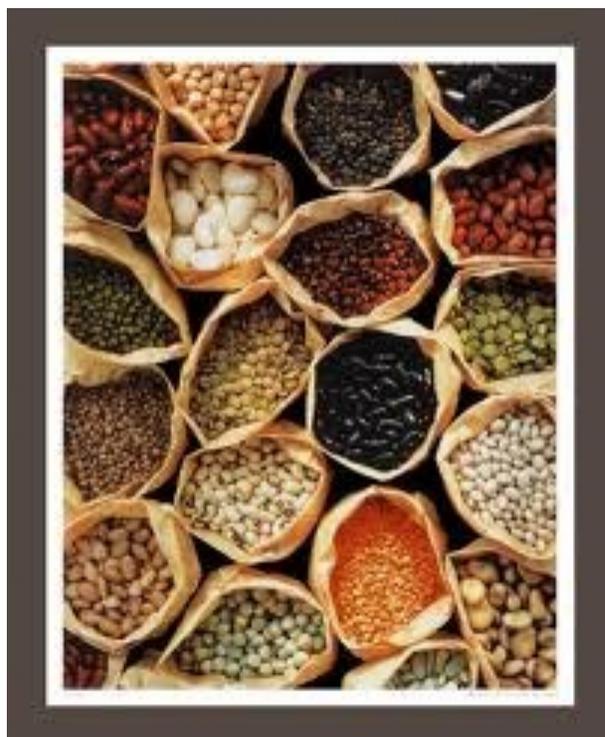
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## An “Incomplete” Source of Protein?

Beans are sometimes referred to as an “incomplete” protein since they don't provide one of the essential amino acids needed from food for building protein in the body. In actual practice, this isn't a concern. Grains (which lack a different essential amino acid) provide the amino acid missing from dry beans and vice versa. Together, they complement each other. Examples of complementary protein include beans and rice, a bean burrito, and beans and corn. For non-vegetarians, the protein in dry beans also can be complemented by serving beans with a small amount of animal protein such as meat, poultry, seafood, dairy or eggs.

It is no longer considered necessary to eat complementary sources of protein together at the same time. Just consume them over the course of a day.

**Source:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension



# Cooking Dry Beans from Scratch CAN be Quick!

If you have avoided cooking dry beans from scratch because “it takes too long,” all it takes is a little planning ahead. The following directions, adapted from information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the California Dry Bean Board, will help you get started.

There are two steps to cooking beans: soaking and cooking:

- Soaking beans allows the dried beans to absorb water, which begins to dissolve the starches that cause intestinal discomfort. While beans are soaking they are also doubling to tripling in size.
- Cooking the beans make them edible and digestible.

## Soaking Beans

*Note:* Lentils, split peas and black-eyed peas do not need to be soaked. Pick through the beans, discarding any discolored or shriveled beans or any foreign matter. Rinse well.

While the traditional slow soak method takes longer than some methods, it is one of the easiest methods:

1. In a stockpot, cover one (1) pound dried beans with 10 cups water.
2. Cover and refrigerate 6-8 hours or overnight.
3. Drain and rinse beans.

## Cooking Beans

1. Return the soaked, rinsed beans to the stockpot. Cover the beans with three (3) times their volume of water. Add herbs or spices (not salt), as desired.
2. Bring to a boil; reduce the heat and simmer gently, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until tender (the time will depend on the type of bean, but start checking after 45-60 minutes). Boiling beans will break the skins and leave you with a mushy meal. Add more water if the beans are not covered. Most beans will cook in 1 to 1½ hours.
3. When the beans are tender, drain and use in recipes; or for later use, immerse them in cold water and cool, then drain well and freeze in 1 - to 2 - cup packages. One pound of dried beans will yield about 5 or 6 cups cooked beans.

## Bean Math

- One 15-ounce can of beans = one and one-half cups of cooked beans, drained.
- One pound dry beans = six cups cooked beans, drained.
- One pound dry beans = two cups dry beans.
- One cup of dry beans = three cups cooked beans, drained.

## Bean Cooking Tips

- Do not add salt or acidic ingredients, like vinegar, tomatoes or juice, this will slow the cooking process. Instead, add these ingredients when the beans are just tender.
- Cooking times vary with the types of beans used but also may vary with their age. Beans are done when they can be easily mashed between two fingers or with a fork. Always test a few beans in case they have not cooked evenly.

**Source:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension



## Bean Recipes

### Speedy Pork Cassoulet (serves 4)

Cassoulet, is a hearty Southwestern French white bean and meat stew. This quick version can be prepared for a weeknight supper.

- 3 boneless pork chops, cut into 3/4 inch cubes
  - 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
  - 2 medium onions, chopped
  - 2 cloves garlic, crushed
  - 2 (15-ounce) cans great Northern beans, rinsed and drained
  - 3/4 cup chicken broth
  - 1/3 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, drained
  - 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
  - 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
  - 1/4 cup chopped parsley
  - 1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs
1. Heat oil in a deep saucepan over medium-high heat.
  2. Cook and stir onions and garlic until tender but not brown.
  3. Add pork, cook and stir for 2-3 minutes or until lightly browned.
  4. Stir in beans, broth, tomatoes, rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper. Bring to boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer 10 minutes or just until pork is tender, stirring occasionally.
  5. Spoon cassoulet into individual soup bowls. Sprinkle each serving with parsley and bread crumbs.

### Mexican Skillet Rice (serves 6)

- 1 pound lean ground beef or turkey
  - 1 medium onion, chopped
  - 2 tablespoons chili powder
  - 1 teaspoon ground cumin
  - 1/2 teaspoon salt
  - 3 cups cooked brown rice
  - 1 16-ounce can pinto beans, drained
  - 2 4-ounce cans diced green chiles
  - 1 medium fresh tomato, seeded and chopped (optional)
  - Fresh cilantro for garish (optional)
1. In large skillet over medium-high heat, cook meat until brown, stirring to crumble; drain. Return meat to skillet.
  2. Add onion, chili powder, cumin and salt; cook until onion is tender.
  3. Stir in rice, beans and chiles; thoroughly heat.
  4. Top with tomato and garish with cilantro if desired. Serve immediately.



### Hummus (serves 4)

Serve hummus as a dip with fresh cut vegetables such as carrots, or serve with crackers.

- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained.
  - 1 tablespoon olive oil
  - 1 tablespoon white wine or cider vinegar; OR 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
  - 1 clove garlic, minced
  - 1 teaspoon ground cumin
  - 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
  - Dash cayenne
  - 1/4 to 1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt
  - 1/4 cup chopped parsley
1. Place all ingredients except yogurt and parsley in a food processor.
  2. Add 1/4 cup of the yogurt and blend until smooth. Add more yogurt, if necessary, until desired consistency is achieved.
  3. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the parsley.
  4. Eat within two days for best quality and safety. Avoid letting hummus sit at room temperature for more than two hours, total time.

