



Now Serving:

Beans!

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If you're looking for a way to stretch your budget and improve your family's nutrition, look no further. Consider adding more beans to your menu. They're convenient, versatile, and lend themselves to many tasty dishes. Beans are a rich source of protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Invite kids into the kitchen to help you make bean dip to accompany baked chips or vegetables. Replace some of the fat in baked goods such as brownies with mashed black beans. Beans can be added to casseroles or soups to add flavor, texture, and more nutrients.

Aim for MyPlate Recommendations

Beans are a part of the legume family. MyPlate classifies beans into two groups: the Protein Foods Group and the Vegetable Group. MyPlate recommendations for protein foods are measured in ounces whereas recommendations for vegetables are measured in cups.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked beans = 1 ounce equivalent for the Protein Foods Group
- 1 cup cooked beans = 1 cup of vegetables

The recommended amounts for both food groups vary from person to person depending on age, gender, and activity level. To learn more about what is right for you and your family, visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

Beans are composed of protein, complex carbohydrates, fiber, antioxidants, important vitamins such as folate, and minerals, including manganese, potassium, iron, phosphorus, copper, and magnesium. On average, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of beans contains 116 calories, 8 grams of protein, and less than 1 gram of fat. This makes beans a good addition to any diet.

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Beans for Your Health!

Heart health: Beans are naturally low in fat and contain no saturated fats, trans fats, or cholesterol. Studies show a diet that includes beans may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Cancer-reducing agents: Beans such as the small red bean have an abundance of antioxidants and phytochemicals (natural plant chemicals), which have been shown to reduce the risk of certain cancers such as colon cancer.

Blood sugar management: Beans contain complex carbohydrates the body digests slowly. This makes them a good choice for diabetics to help keep tight control over their blood sugar levels.

Weight control: Beans are low in fat and an excellent source of fiber and protein. Fiber and protein will help the body feel full faster and longer. Protein, along with exercise, will help build lean muscle.

Pregnancy and healthy babies: Folate (the natural form of the B vitamin folic acid) is one of the many vitamins found in beans. Folic acid has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects in newborns significantly. According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, women who are pregnant should consume 600 mcg and women of childbearing years should consume 400 mcg of dietary folate equivalents daily. Eating a diet rich in beans will contribute to this goal.

Food allergies and intolerances: For people with food allergies and intolerances, beans provide a great source of nutrition. Individuals who have celiac disease are unable to consume gluten, a protein found in grain products. They can supplement their diet with beans to get fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals that might otherwise be missing because they aren't able to eat grain foods.

Tips for Adding Beans to Your Diet

When adding beans to your diet, start slowly and be sure to drink extra fluids because of the increased fiber.

Experiment with different kinds of beans to find the best flavor combination for your dish. Here are a few ideas for adding beans to your diet:

- **Main dishes:** Add beans to chili, burgers, and rice for a satisfying entrée.
- **Side dishes:** Baked beans or bean salad would make a great addition to any meal.
- **Salads:** Add beans to salads for added nutrition and color.
- **Pasta:** Adding beans to pasta dishes will add not only another dimension of flavor but boost the appearance of your dish, as well.
- **Dips and spreads:** Bean dips and spreads make a great snack or an appetizer.
- **Baked goods:** Replace all or part of the fat ingredients with mashed or pureed beans in foods such as brownies and cookies. You will add protein and fiber while cutting back on fat, cholesterol, and calories.

Quick Tip

If you have a picky eater at your house, try pureeing beans in a blender or food processor, then add them to recipes such as soups and casseroles.

Time-saving Tip

Make a large batch of beans and freeze in recipe-sized amounts in freezer containers or bags. To use, thaw frozen beans in the refrigerator overnight, in a microwave oven using the defrost cycle, or in a pan of water (for about an hour).

Preparation and Cooking Tips

Dry beans require soaking in water. The soaking rehydrates the beans and allows for even cooking.

Preferred Hot Soak Method: Sort beans by laying them on a cookie sheet and removing any small stones or dirt pieces. Place in a colander and rinse under cold water. Add 10 cups of cold water to a pot for each pound (2 cups) of beans you plan to cook. Bring the water to a boil and boil for 1–3 minutes. Cover the pot. Let stand. A four-hour soak is ideal. Finally, drain and rinse the soaked beans. Add fresh, cold water to fully cover beans. If you wish, add 1 tablespoon of oil and 1 teaspoon of salt. Simmer the beans until they are tender. Serve them plain or follow a favorite recipe. Add ingredients rich in acid or calcium such as tomatoes, chili sauce, ketchup, vinegar, wine, or molasses after the beans have been soaked and fully cooked. If you add these ingredients too soon, they may prevent dry beans from becoming tender. Beans are done when they can be mashed easily with a fork.

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

1½ cups of cooked beans = 1 can of drained beans

How to Reduce the Gas

Specific carbohydrates in beans and other legumes may lead to the formation of unwanted intestinal gas. Don't let this discourage you. Try these steps to reduce the occurrence of gas and bloating:

- When using dry beans, change the water several times during soaking and discard the soaking water. Some of the gas-producing sugars are released into the water. Using the hot-soak method (instead of soaking beans overnight in cold water) also results in the release of more of the sugars into the water.
- When using canned beans, rinse them before adding to recipes.
- Add more beans and other high-fiber foods to your diet slowly. Your body will adjust over time, and gas will be less of an issue. Chew the beans well to help with absorption, and drink plenty of water when increasing fiber in your diet.
- Consider using a gas-reducing enzyme tablet (such as Beano), available in many grocery stores.

Recipes

Key to Abbreviations

tsp. = teaspoon
Tbsp. = tablespoon
c. = cup
oz. = ounce
pkg. = package

g = gram
mg = milligram
mcg = microgram
lb. = pound

Black Bean Quesadillas

- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained, rinsed
- ¼ c. chopped tomato
- 3 Tbsp. chopped cilantro
- 8 6-inch whole-wheat or flour tortillas
- 4 oz. soy cheese/jalapeno jack, shredded
- 32 spinach leaves, shredded

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mash beans. Stir in tomato and cilantro. Spread evenly onto four tortillas. Sprinkle with cheese, spinach, and salsa. Top with remaining tortillas. Bake tortillas on ungreased cookie sheet for 12 minutes. Cut into wedges and serve.

Makes eight servings.

Per serving: 250 calories, 8 g fat, 11 g protein, 32 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 158 mg calcium, 1 mcg folate, 238 mg potassium, and 480 mg sodium

Enchilada Casserole

- 1 lb. lean ground beef
- 1 can (15 to 16 oz.) kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 to 16 oz.) pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 c. chopped onions
- ½ c. green pepper
- 2 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 10-oz. can enchilada sauce
- ⅓ c. water
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. cumin
- 2 c. Colby-jack cheese
- 6 whole-wheat or flour tortillas

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Brown ground beef, onion, and green pepper. Drain excess liquid. Mix beef, onion, pepper, beans, tomatoes, and spices. In a 9-by-13 greased pan, layer tortillas, ground beef and vegetable mixture, and cheese. Continue to layer tortilla/meat mixture/cheese until full. Place in oven at 425 degrees for 30 minutes. Casserole should be browned on top.

Makes 12 servings.

Per serving: 310 calories, 10 g fat, 23 g protein, 29 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 287 mg calcium, 34 mcg folate, 169 mg potassium, and 580 mg sodium

Bean Dip

- ½ c. canned vegetarian baked beans, drained
- 3 Tbsp. shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 Tbsp. regular or hickory-smoked barbecue sauce
- 2 large carrots cut into diagonal slices
- 1 medium red or green pepper, cut into chunks
- Whole-grain crackers or baked chips (optional)

Place beans in a small microwavable bowl; mash slightly with fork. Stir in cheese and barbecue sauce. Cover with plastic wrap and vent slightly. Microwave on high for 1 minute; stir. Microwave for 30 seconds or until hot. Serve with vegetables, chips or crackers.

Makes four servings.

Per serving: 60 calories, 2 g fat, 3 g protein, 10 g carbohydrate, 1 g fiber, 49 mg calcium, 5 mcg folate, 76 mg potassium, and 220 mg sodium

Black Bean Brownies

- 1 can (15 to 16 oz.) black beans
- 3 eggs
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- ¼ c. cocoa powder
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ¾ c. white sugar
- 1 tsp. instant coffee (optional)
- ½ c. semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease an 8-by-8 baking dish. Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips in a blender; blend until smooth; pour mixture into prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with chocolate chips. Bake in preheated oven until top is dry and sides start to pull away from the baking dish; about 30 minutes.

Makes 16 servings.

Per serving: 140 calories, 6 g fat, 3 g protein, 20 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 13 mg calcium, 5 mcg folate, 13 mg potassium, and 105 mg sodium

Three-Bean Salad with Ginger Dressing

1 can (15 to 16 oz.) green beans (or 1 lb. frozen green beans, cooked or steamed according to package directions)

1 can (15 to 16 oz.) dark red kidney beans, drained, rinsed

1 can (15 to 16 oz.) pinto beans, drained, rinsed

¼ c. sliced green onions and tops

Ginger Dressing

¼ c. canola oil

⅓ c. apricot preserves

2 Tbsp. plus 2 tsp. cider vinegar

2 Tbsp. sugar

½ tsp. ground ginger

Mix ingredients for ginger dressing in a large bowl. Drain and rinse beans; add to ginger dressing and mix. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours, mixing occasionally.

Makes eight servings.

Per serving: 213 calories, 8 g fat, 6 g protein, 31 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 58 mg calcium, 71 mcg folate, 327 mg potassium, and 473 mg sodium

Recipe courtesy of Northarvest Bean Growers Association

Light Italian Pasta Bean Salad

1 c. dry spiral macaroni

1 small head fresh broccoli, cut into bite-sized pieces

2 carrots, peeled and diced

1 tomato, diced

1 can (15 to 16 oz.) black beans, drained and rinsed

¼ c. reduced-calorie/light Italian dressing

¼ c. grated Parmesan cheese

Cook macaroni in large saucepan of water just until tender. Drain and rinse with cold water. In a large bowl, mix broccoli, carrots, and tomato. Add the rest of the ingredients to vegetables and stir gently. Cover and chill. Before serving, stir salad; add additional dressing if necessary.

Makes eight servings.

Per serving: 135 calories, 3 g fat, 8 g protein, 21 g carbohydrate, 6 g fiber, 80 mg calcium, 96 mcg folate, 316 mg potassium, and 142 mg sodium

Recipe courtesy of Northarvest Bean Growers Association



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