

NUTRITION BITES

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Cooking with Beans, Peas and Lentils

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The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) encourage a healthy, plant-rich diet to reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases. Plant foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. These foods are a good source of fiber and other nutrients.

Beans, peas, and lentils (also referred to as pulses) are plant foods that are often underutilized. They are versatile foods that can be added to a variety of meals for extra flavor, fiber and protein.



There are many different types of beans, peas and lentils. Try experimenting with a variety of these since they have unique flavors and can be used in different recipes. Some of the common types include:

- **Adzuki beans:** Slightly sweet flavor, and great for salads, soups and casseroles.
- **Black beans:** Slightly sweet flavor, and great for soups, chili and rice dishes.
- **Black-eyed peas:** Earthy taste, and great for salads or rice dishes.
- **Cannellini beans:** Mild flavor, and great for casseroles, dips and Italian dishes.
- **Chickpeas (or garbanzo beans):** Nutty taste, and great for soups, stews and hummus.
- **Kidney beans:** “Meaty” taste, and great for chili, stews and bean salads.
- **Lentils:** Earthy taste, and great for soups and curry dishes.
- **Navy beans:** Mild flavor, and great for soups and Boston baked beans.
- **Pinto beans:** Earthy flavor, and great for stews, rice dishes and refried beans.
- **Soybeans (or edamame):** Full flavored, and great as a side dish.



Benefits of Beans, Peas, and Lentils

Beans, peas and lentils are nutrient-dense foods that are a great source of plant-based protein, fiber, iron, folate and potassium. A half-cup serving of cooked beans provides about 7 grams of protein, which is similar to a 1-ounce serving of meat or poultry, and 4 to 10 grams of fiber.

Eating a diet rich in fiber may help with bowel regularity, lowering blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and weight management. A high-fiber diet is also associated with a lower risk for cancer.

Women should aim for 25 grams of fiber per day, and men should aim for 38 grams of fiber per day. These foods are also inexpensive and low in sodium, fat and cholesterol.

Purchasing and Preparing Beans

Beans, peas and lentils can be purchased dried, canned or frozen. These options have similar nutritional value, although canned beans tend to be higher in sodium. When purchasing these products, look for “no salt added” or “low

sodium” options. Canned and frozen options are more convenient since they do not require as much cooking time.

Dried beans take longer to prepare since you will need to rinse, soak and cook them first. You can soak the beans overnight by placing them in a container and covering them with water.

For a quicker method, you can place the beans in a large pot covered with water and bring them to a boil. You will then remove them from the heat, cover them, and let the beans sit for an hour.

Before cooking the beans, it is best to drain the water and replace it with fresh water for cooking. When cooking, beans will need to be brought to a boil and then reduced to a simmer. Cooking times will vary from 45 minutes to 120 minutes depending on the type of beans.

These plant-based foods are versatile and can be added to a variety of recipes for any meal. Here are some ways to add plant-based protein to your meals.

Breakfast:

- ✓ Avocado and hummus toast (add tomatoes, feta, red onion and other toppings)
- ✓ Breakfast burrito with pinto beans, rice, salsa and veggies
- ✓ Scrambled eggs with black beans and vegetables
- ✓ Sweet potato breakfast hash with black beans
- ✓ White beans and spinach omelet

Lunch and Dinner:

- ✓ Bean burritos (using black beans, pinto beans or refried beans)
- ✓ Chickpea salad sandwich on whole wheat bread or crackers
- ✓ Chili or curry dishes
- ✓ Falafel wrap with hummus, tahini dressing and mixed vegetables
- ✓ Grilled chicken salad with crispy beans (instead of croutons)

- ✓ Hummus quesadillas with sauteed vegetables
- ✓ Lentil-stuffed bell peppers
- ✓ Orzo and white bean salad
- ✓ Pasta with lentil meatballs
- ✓ Quesadillas (black beans or white beans with spinach)
- ✓ Soups: Black beans, lentils, minestrone (with kidney beans, white beans or chickpeas), navy beans, split peas, etc.
- ✓ Tacos with refried beans or black beans
- ✓ White bean pasta with pesto
- ✓ White bean sandwich with pesto and arugula

Snacks:

- ✓ Black bean protein energy balls
- ✓ Black bean salsa with chips
- ✓ Crispy roasted lentils

- ✓ Parmesan and garlic roasted edamame

- ✓ Raw vegetables or pita bread with hummus or a white bean dip
- ✓ Roasted chickpeas (add salt, parmesan, cinnamon or other flavors)
- ✓ Roasted kidney beans and chickpeas trail mix

Desserts and Smoothies:

- ✓ Black bean brownies
- ✓ Black bean chocolate mousse
- ✓ Strawberry or chocolate white bean smoothie
- ✓ White bean blondies



Featured Recipe

Creamy White Beans with Spinach

Recipe from: [Two Peas & Their Pod](#)

Prep Time: **5 minutes**

Cook Time: **15 minutes**

Total Time: **20 minutes**

Servings: **4**



INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 large shallot, chopped

4 cups spinach, roughly chopped

5 cloves garlic, minced

2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, drained

1 cup vegetable broth, more if desired

Kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

¼ cup Parmesan cheese or nutritional yeast

1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1.** In a large skillet, **heat** the olive oil over medium-high heat. **Add** the shallot and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 2.** **Add** the spinach and cook until wilted. **Stir** in the garlic and cook for 1 minute.
- 3.** **Stir** in the beans and vegetable broth. **Season** with salt, pepper and crushed red pepper flakes.
- 4.** **Bring to a boil** and then reduce to a simmer. Let **simmer** for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. The beans will get creamy and thicken. If you want to break up some of the beans with a wooden spoon, you can.
- 5.** **Stir in** the Parmesan cheese (or nutritional yeast) and lemon juice. If the mixture is too thick for your liking, you can add a little extra vegetable broth.
- 6.** **Serve** warm with bread, pasta, rice, eggs, polenta or potatoes.

Nutritional Information:

Calories: 319; Total Carbohydrates: 50g; Dietary Fiber: 11g; Total Sugars: 2g; Protein: 19g; Total Fat: 6g; Saturated Fat: 2g; Sodium: 373mg.

