



Beans + Legumes - WFPB Power Foods

Often referred to as the power-foods of a plant-based diet, beans and legumes are a staple to get familiar with if you're going to enjoy eating WFPB (whole food, plant-based) to its fullest potential.

To start, beans are delicious, especially when prepared properly (which Ground Leaf is going to show you how to do) and especially when added to some of the recipes you'll find on this site. Think tacos, burritos, enchiladas, baked beans, sprouted legumes, and fragrant, enticing bowls of chili, curry, and dhal. They are versatile, packed with nutrition, and their flavor potential is downright exciting for plant-based foodies.

So what is a bean and what's the difference between a bean and a legume? Simply put, a bean is a seed that we can eat and a legume is a class of vegetables that includes beans. (1) Chickpeas, edamame, lentils, and alfalfa are all legumes. Kidney beans, navy beans, pinto beans, and heirloom beans, are all...beans.

Ground Leaf recommends 3 servings of beans and legumes per day. Considering they count as both a vegetable and a protein (bonus!), upping your daily intake of legumes will also increase phytonutrients, fiber, minerals, and B Vitamins. (2)

If you find that beans bother your stomach, remember that not all beans are the same. The best way to determine which beans your body tolerates is to tune in and pay attention to your stomach and how you feel after eating them. In many cases, trying different varieties, and switching up the cooking methods (such as using a pressure cooker), can help to relieve discomfort. According to the University of Michigan Health System, a small amount of baking soda or vinegar added to your soaking water can reduce the number of indigestible starches. Make sure you don't cook your beans in the same water they soaked in, and always be sure to give them a good rinse before and after cooking.(3)

Preparation and cooking

The two most common forms of beans are dried and canned. Canned beans are convenient and quick, and often ensure a perfectly-cooked bean. However, canned beans do tend to have more sodium, are less fresh-tasting, and can potentially have preservatives. If you are using canned beans, be sure to check out the ingredients, and do your research. Check out this article about seven different companies who use BPA-free cans.(4)

True or False: Cooking beans with salt prohibits cooking and yields hard beans. FALSE! It wouldn't take you long to find many recommendations on the internet to avoid adding salt when cooking dry beans, but "Cook's Illustrated: The Science of Good Cooking" notes that soaking beans in a salt brine AND cooking in salt water yielded better results. All Ground Leaf bean recipes specify the exact amount of salt to use to ensure a delicious tasting final product.

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True or False: Cooking beans with high-acid foods, particularly tomatoes, prohibits cooking and yields hard beans. TRUE! The acid in tomatoes can greatly increase the required cooking time of your beans. Because of this, Ground Leaf suggests either cooking the beans first without the tomato product and adding the tomatoes when the beans are sufficiently cooked, OR adding a significant amount of cooking time (this could be 2-4 times).

Keep in mind that most dried beans, when cooked, grow up to three times in size. An average can of beans is about 1.5 cups of cooked beans, so you can use about 1/2 cup of dry beans to equal one can. If you rehydrate your beans before cooking, as suggested in the next section, you will get a better idea of the volume you're dealing with as rehydrating plumps the beans back up.

Soaking

Rehydrating dried beans by soaking them is a common practice and is believed by some to remove some of the properties that can cause indigestion. (5) Whether or not that is true for you, soaking beans will greatly reduce cooking times, and also ensures a more evenly-cooked end product.

You may also want to soak your beans first so that the cooking time of the bean is more in line with the other ingredients you're cooking. For instance, if you're making a bean soup with pinto beans, they would take about 25 minutes to cook un-soaked in a pressure cooker, and only about 6 if soaked. The other ingredients in the soup, like carrots, celery, potatoes, etc. would be over-cooked if done for 25 minutes but much more nicely cooked with the shorter cooking time. How's that for some strategy?

As a quick reference, here are some of the main soaking practices:

- Soak overnight or for at least 6 hours depending on the bean (soaking guide below).
- Quick soak – cover beans in boiling water and allow to sit for one hour.
- Quick soak in pressure cooker – place beans and water in machine, set for high pressure at 1 minute, allow pressure to release naturally.

Is soaking dried beans necessary? Absolutely not, especially if you own a pressure cooker. If you don't soak your beans, you will simply cook them for a longer time. Cooking un-soaked beans in a pressure cooker will greatly reduce cooking time compared to a conventional stovetop or crockpot, which can take hours. If you'd like more specific details on soaking and cooking, you can check out Eden Organic's online guide. (6)

Variety

As with everything plant-based, variety is key. Another drawback of canned beans is that there are only so many options available. If you're looking to mix it up, heirloom beans are beautiful,

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come in so many different forms, and are a diverse and interesting way to fire up your love affair with beans. Check out Rancho Gordo to see all the beautiful, interesting beans they carry.

Fresh beans are harder to come by, but are more likely found seasonally in big pods at Farmer's Markets or health oriented stores with abundant produce sections.

To make sure you always have readily-available healthy foods, it's an excellent idea to batch cook your beans, and freeze some in commonly used portions.

Get creative, don't be afraid to try different types, and keep in mind that beans are an incredible, delicious way to keep your plant-based protein intake at its ideal levels. (7)

- 1) <http://www.veghealthguide.com/legumes-beans/>
- 2) <http://www.livestrong.com/article/461669-do-beans-count-as-a-vegetable-serving/>
- 3) <http://www.livestrong.com/article/482870-beans-and-digestive-problems/>
- 4) <http://www.treehugger.com/green-food/7-companies-you-can-trust-to-use-bpa-free-cans.html>
- 5) <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipes/food-guides/beans>
- 6) http://www.edenfoods.com/articles/view.php?articles_id=179
- 7) <https://www.healthaliciousness.com/articles/beans-legumes-highest-protein.php>