

Beans

Beans are a wonderful way to add high-quality, plant-based protein to your diet. They are high in iron, B vitamins and fiber, and are versatile enough that you may never tire of them. Beans stay fresh longer when stored in a cool, dark place. Don't use beans that are more than a year old, as their nutrient content and digestibility may be reduced. Also, old beans will not soften, even with thorough cooking.

Preparation and Cooking

1. Sort beans for stones and broken beans, then rinse.
2. Soak for 6-24 hours, using 4 cups of water per cup of beans. Small and medium-size beans may require less soaking—4 hours.
Note: If you've forgotten to presoak the beans, you can bring them to a boil in ample water to cover. Turn off the heat, cover the pot, and let stand for 1 hour.
3. Drain the beans, discarding the soaking water. Rinse thoroughly. Discard any loose skins before cooking as this will improve digestibility.
4. Place the beans in a heavy pot and add 3-4 cups of fresh water.
5. Bring to a full boil and skim off the foam.
6. Add a small piece of kombu (seaweed) and a few bay leaves or garlic cloves for flavor and better digestibility.
7. Cover, lower the temperature and simmer for the suggested time. Check beans 30 minutes before the end of their cooking time. Beans are done when the middle is soft and easy to squeeze.
8. About 10 minutes before the end of cooking, add 1 teaspoon of unrefined sea salt.
9. Continue cooking until beans are tender.

1 cup dry beans	cooking time
adzuki	1-1 1/2 hrs
anasazi	1 1/2-2 hrs
black (turtle)	1 1/2-2 hrs
black-eyed peas	30-45 mins
cannellini	1-1 1/2 hrs
chickpeas /garbanzo	1 1/2-2 hrs
cranberry	1 1/2-2 hrs
great northern	1-1 1/2 hrs
lentils—brown & French*	30-45 mins
lentils—red*	20-30 mins
lima beans	1 hr
split peas*	45 mins
pinto	1 1/2-2 hrs
navy	1 1/2-2 hrs
mung	1 hr.
red kidney	2-3 hrs
soybeans	4-6 hrs

*does not require soaking

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Some people have difficulty digesting beans and legumes and develop gas, intestinal problems, irritability, and unclear thinking.

Digestibility

Here are a few techniques for preparing and eating legumes to alleviate most problems.

- Chew beans thoroughly and know that even small amounts have high nutritional and healing value.
- Avoid giving legumes to children under 18 months because they have not developed the gastric enzymes to digest them properly. Except in the case of an allergy, soybean products, fresh peas, and green beans are usually tolerated.
- Experiment with your ability to digest beans. Smaller beans, like adzuki, lentils, mung beans, and peas digest most easily. Pinto, kidney, navy, black-eyed peas, garbanzo, lima, and black beans are harder to digest and should be eaten only occasionally. Soybeans and black soybeans are the most difficult beans to digest.
- Experiment with combinations, ingredients and seasonings. Legumes combine best with green or non-starchy vegetables and seaweeds.
- Season with unrefined sea salt, miso, or soy sauce near the end of cooking. If added at the beginning, the beans will not cook completely. Salt is a digestive aid when used correctly.
- Adding fennel or cumin near the end of cooking helps prevent gas.
- Adding kombu or kelp seaweed to the beans helps improve flavor and digestion, adds minerals and nutrients, and speeds up the cooking process.
- Pour a little apple cider, brown rice or white wine vinegar into the water in the last stages of cooking. This softens the beans and breaks down protein chains and indigestible compounds.