

Spilling the Bean! They are good for you.

One way to eat healthier and save money on your budget is to consider including more beans in your diet. Beans are a nutrient-packed food that can be a staple in family meals. They are rich in fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals. They can help promote a healthy body weight, support digestion, and provide sustained energy. Few foods are as budget-friendly and versatile as beans, making them an ideal choice for busy families.

Dry edible beans bring several health benefits to the table because they are naturally a rich source of several nutrients. According to published research, bean consumption may reduce the risk for heart disease and certain types of cancer, such as colon cancer. Additionally, a diet that includes beans is associated with lower body weight and better control of blood sugar among those with diabetes. For those who have food allergies or follow special diets (such as vegetarian or gluten free), beans are valuable because they provide nutrients, including fiber, protein, and many vitamins and minerals, that may be missing or low in specialized diets.

Tips for cooking and preparing beans.

- Canned beans are great for convenience. Dry beans are cheaper and go further.
- Cook a large batch of beans and freeze them in smaller portions for future meals.
- Cool and freeze them on sheet pans, then transfer to freezer containers to prevent clumping.
- Beans are easy to add to soups, stews, salads and even smoothies for texture and nutrition.
- You can replace meat with beans in recipes.
- Experiment with different kinds of beans for a variety, such as black beans, chickpeas, or navy beans.
- Each variety provides a different color, flavor, and texture to meals.

Cooking dry edible beans is simple.

1. First, inspect the beans and remove any broken beans or foreign materials. Rinse thoroughly with cold water.
2. Next use the “preferred Hot Soak” method: Add 10 cups of cold water to a pot for each pound (2 cups) of beans. Bring water to a boil and boil for one to three minutes. Cover the pot. Let stand. Letting them soak for four hours is ideal.
3. Drain and rinse-soaked beans. Add fresh, cold water to cover beans. Simmer the beans until they are tender. Serve them plain or follow a favorite recipe for your family.
4. Add ingredients rich in acid or calcium such as tomatoes, chili sauce, ketchup, vinegar, wine, and molasses after the beans have soaked and have been fully cooked. If you add these ingredients too soon, they may prevent dry beans from becoming tender.

Because dry beans have a neutral flavor, you can substitute one type for another. Also, you can add herbs and spices that you like.

Hard water does not soften beans properly. If you have hard water, use bottled water for soaking and cooking dry beans, or used canned beans.

Black Bean Brownies

1 (15.5 oz.) can black beans, drained and rinsed

3 eggs

3 tablespoons vegetable oil

¼ cup cocoa powder

1 pinch salt

1 teaspoon vanilla

¾ cup white sugar

1 teaspoon instant coffee (optional)

½ cup semisweet chocolate chips.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease an 8x8 inch baking dish. Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips in a blender; blend until smooth; pour mixture into greased baking dish. Sprinkle with chocolate chips. Bake in preheated oven until top is dry and sides start to pull away from baking dish; about 30 minutes.

Source: USDA