

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. Dry beans stay fresh longer when stored in a cool, dark place (rather than on your countertop). Don't use beans that are more than a year old, as their nutrient content and digestibility are much lower. Also, old beans will not soften, even with thorough cooking. Follow these steps when preparing beans:

1. Check beans for rocks and shriveled or broken pieces, then rinse.
2. Soak for six hours or overnight, with water covering four inches higher than the beans. Small and medium-size beans may require less soaking—about four hours should be enough.
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 one hour.
3. Drain and rinse the beans, discarding the soaking water. Always discard any loose skins before cooking, as this will increase digestibility.
4. Place the beans in a heavy pot and add 3 to 4 cups 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 minimum cooking time. Beans are done when the middle is soft and easy to squeeze.
8. About 10 minutes before the end of cooking time, add 1 teaspoon of unrefined sea salt.
9. Cook until beans are tender.

1 cup dry beans	Cooking time
Adzuki	45-60 minutes
Anasazi	60-90 minutes
Black (turtle)	60-90 minutes
Black-eyed peas	60 minutes
Cannellini	90-120 minutes
Chickpeas (garbanzos)	120-180 minutes
Cranberry	60-90 minutes
Fava	60-90 minutes
Great northern	90-120 minutes
Kidney	60-90 minutes
Lentils*	30-45 minutes
Lima beans	60-90 minutes
Mung	60 minutes
Navy	60-90 minutes
Pinto	90 minutes
Split peas	45-60 minutes

*do not require soaking

All times are approximate. Cooking lengths depend on how strong the heat is and how hard the water is. A general rule is that small beans cook for approximately 30 minutes, medium beans cook for approximately 60 minutes, and large beans cook for approximately 90 minutes. Be sure to taste the beans to see if they are fully cooked and tender.

Digestibility

Some people have difficulty digesting beans and legumes. They may develop gas, intestinal problems, irritability, or unclear thinking. Here are a few techniques for preparing and eating legumes that will alleviate most problems.

- Soak beans for several days, changing the water twice daily, until a small tail forms on the beans.
- Use a pressure cooker. This also cuts down on cooking time.
- Chew beans thoroughly and know that even small amounts have a 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.
- 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. 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 salt is 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 vinegar, or white wine vinegar into the water during the last stages of cooking. This softens the beans and breaks down protein chains and indigestible compounds.
- Take enzymes with your meal.