

## BEANS BEANS AND MORE BEANS

It is difficult to know how to cook various beans, what to add them too and how they are nutritionally beneficial. On average, cooked dry beans are approximately 120 calories per ½ cup cooked. They are full of B-vitamins (which helps our body produce energy), folic acid (helps with cell reproduction), selenium, zinc, fiber and does not raise blood sugar as much as rice and potatoes. We recommended that you eat 3 cups of beans every week.

Here are some ways to consume your recommended intake of beans. Try tossing them into a salad, or add them to your rice dish or stir fry. Use hummus to dip your veggies in instead of high calorie salad dressing. Beans can be added to stews, soups and pasta dishes. Since beans have a high protein count, they can be a good substitute for chicken or meat dishes. Keep a can of beans in your pantry ready to add them to your next meal to give it a good nutritional boost.

With the price of canned foods, it is a great money saver to buy dried beans. When preparing dried beans rinse them under cool water to wash away any foreign matter or debris. Remember you do not have to rinse split peas, lentils or mung beans. Next, soak beans in a large bowl with water for 8-12 hours. This bowl needs to be large since the beans will more than double in height. Replace the water every few hours. Pour the beans and water into a pot and boil them for 10 minutes. Reduce temperature and let them simmer for 1-2 hours until they are tender. You can add low sodium chicken broth to give the beans some extra flavor. Once the beans are tender they are ready to eat.

By replacing the water often when soaking the beans and cooking them slowly should reduce the raffinose (the compound that may cause gas or bloating). Also remember to increase your consumption of beans slowly and drink plenty of water. This will also reduce the amount of gastrointestinal discomfort.

One pound of dried beans will make between 5-6 cups of cooked beans. When boiling dry beans, proteins are released and foam will appear at the surface of the water. Do not skim this foam off, it will reabsorb. Also, if you have hard water, your beans will not be as tender regardless of how long you cook them or soak them.

Beans have many wonderful health benefits including lowering your risk of colon cancer. As well as reduces blood cholesterol including LDL (bad cholesterol), which is a leading causes of heart disease. Beans also help lower the risk of type II Diabetes as well as improving blood sugar control. Eating beans on a regular basis may help improve your immune system. With the nutritional improvement beans give to our diet we should all try to eat them as often as possible.

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