



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Department of Human Services, and USDA Food & Nutrition Services Cooperating

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Simply Good Food BLACK BEANS

BACKGROUND: Black Beans are also called Turtle Beans and are identified with Hispanic cuisines. They have an earthy flavor that stands up to lots of onions, garlic, chili peppers, spices, and smoked meats. They are medium in size with a white dot on one edge. They hold their black color in cooking and color the liquid, too. Being thin skinned, they cook quickly and soften to thick-soup consistency if cooked too long.



AVAILABILITY: Dry, canned and sometimes refrigerated or frozen all year. Planted in late Spring to mid-Summer, the vines are cut when pods are plump and laid in windows to dry, when combines pick them up and shall them. They are cleaned, sorted and graded before packing and shipping to stores.

NUTRITION: Beans, when eaten with small amounts of meat, dairy products, or grains (rice, corn, tortillas, etc.) supply all essential amino acids (protein components). Recent studies show that besides being cholesterol free, beans contain soluble fiber, and have the ability to lower one's cholesterol level. One half cup per day can lower levels by 5 to 20 percent.

Beans are an energy food. Their carbohydrates digest slowly satisfy hunger longer while still being low in calories. Dry beans are a rich source of B-vitamins that help turn food into energy and keep digestive and nervous systems healthy. They are the best vegetable source of Folate or Folic acid, the B-vitamin that can help prevent some birth defects, as well as cancer and

heart attacks. Beans provide iron for building red blood (1 cup supplies half of the RDA for average adults), calcium (2-10%) and phosphorus (26-40% of the RDA for the average adult). Beans are high in fiber, cholesterol free and low in sodium if unsalted during cooking. Dry beans have long been at the top of the USDA's list of foods with the lowest cost per gram of protein.

BEAN MATH: A 1 pound package of dry beans equals 2 cups dry or 5-6 cups cooked beans. One 16-oz. can, drained, equals 1 2/3 cups.

PREPARATION: Use in recipes calling for slow, all day cooking. Soaking is not essential for black beans, but will shorten cooking time. The boil-soak method improves taste, texture, appearance and digestibility of beans, especially when the soak water is discarded. No important amounts of nutrients are lost. Cooking time depends on use, variety, storage conditions, altitude, water softness, and if cooked with acids. Firm beans are best for salads. Cook longer for use in casseroles, soups or stews. Cook until soft to puree or mash beans.

STORAGE: Dry beans stored at high temperatures and humidity for long periods are difficult to cook. Store dry or canned beans in a cool dry place.

ALTITUDE: At high altitudes, water boils at a lower temperature, so beans take longer to cook.

WATER SOFTNESS: Add 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon baking soda (no more) per pound of beans to shorten cooking time in hard water.

ACID FOODS: Slow down cooking. Add tomatoes, vinegar, etc., last.



RECIPES

Black Bean Vegetable Soup

Ingredients:

½ cup dry black beans washed	3 cups water
½ cup red wine or cranberry juice	½ tsp. oregano
4 slices bacon cut into 1/4" pieces	10 peppercorns
½ cup tomato puree	3 cloves garlic
¾ cup diced celery	3 whole cloves
1 leek, diced (about ½ cup)	1 bay leaf
1/3 cup chopped onion	1 cup water
1/3 cup diced carrot	1 ham hock
½ cup rice, uncooked	6 cups beef broth

Directions:

Place dry black beans in a large saucepan with 3 cups water; bring to a boil; boil 2 minutes; remove from heat; allow to stand for 1 hour. Drain; set aside. In a large soup pot, brown bacon until crisp. Add celery, leek, onion, and carrot; saute 8-10 minutes. Add beans, beef broth, ham hock, wine or cranberry juice, tomato puree and oregano to soup kettle. Make bouquet garni using peppercorns, garlic, cloves and bay leaf; add to kettle (tie spices up in a cheesecloth square). Bring to a boil; reduce heat, cover and simmer 2 ½ hours. Add 1 cup water and rice, continue cooking ½ hour longer or until rice is cooked and beans are tender. Remove bouquet garni and discard. Remove ham hock and cut meat from bone, return meat to pot. Makes 2 ½ quarts.



Black Bean Dip

Ingredients:

1 cup black, cooked beans	1/8 tsp. pepper
2 Tbs. shortening	1/8 tsp. Accent (optional)
1 medium onion, chopped very fine	
2 Tbs. Worcestershire sauce	
½ tsp. garlic salt	1 Tbs. sugar
1/8 tsp. Tabasco sauce (optional)	
½ tsp. celery salt	salt to taste

Directions:

Fry the onion in the shortening until completely brown. Add the beans and all other ingredients and mix in a blender until highly pureed. Simmer over low heat for 20-25 minutes (careful, don't burn). Add milk if puree gets too dry or until it has the consistency of a dip. Serve hot or cold with potato chips, crackers or tortillas. Serves 6-10 depending on amount of other dips or hors d'oeuvres available.

***Source:** Explore the Magic World of California Beans and Basic Bean, Cookery by the California Dry Bean Advisory Board; The Joy of Cooking: Black Bean Recipes by the Michigan Bean Commission; prepared by E. Kay Davis, M.S., L.D., C.F.C.S., CEA-FCS Lubbock County, and modified by Sherri Halsell, County Extension Agent, FCS, Clay County.*

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