

5 Easy Ways to

Enjoy Legumes (Dried Beans, Peas, and Lentils)

There are dozens of delicious reasons to enjoy more legumes like black beans, navy beans, garbanzo beans (aka chickpeas), and split peas, as well as multiple colors of lentils. Nutrient-rich legumes are a tasty way to get the dietary fiber that most of us are missing. Legumes are so good for you that they carry an on-package health claim: *Diets including beans may reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers.*

1. Spill beans out of a can.

For immediate gratification, pre-cooked, canned beans are a convenient choice. Make sure that your cupboards are never bare of beans - and you'll be ready for legumes at any meal. Rinse beans under cold running water to remove extra sodium. Add beans to homemade or canned soup, to tossed vegetable salads, or to Mexican dishes for an instant nutrient boost.

2. Dish it up with dried beans.

Dried beans are one of nature's most economical and nutrient-rich foods. To cook, soak overnight, then simmer in water or broth for one or more hours, depending on type. They can also be prepared more quickly using hot soak or quick soak methods. For detailed instructions on cooking methods, visit www.mayoclinic.com/health/legumes/NU00260.

3. Learn more about lentils.

Lentils are a delicious, inexpensive, Montana-grown product, that come in many colors: green, red, pink, brown, and even black. Busy cooks appreciate their versatility and the fact that they cook quickly (25-50 minutes) without soaking. A staple of Indian cuisine, lentils are often served as dal - spicy combinations of lentils, garlic, onions, vegetables, and curry.

4. Experiment with split peas.

Like other legumes, split peas are an inexpensive source of protein, fiber, and B-vitamins. Like lentils, they cook quickly without soaking. Any web search will produce dozens of delicious split pea recipes, beyond pea and ham soup. Consider pea soup with winter squash, kale, or cabbage - or by adding some sweet yellow split peas in your chili recipe.

5. Get rid of gas troubles.

Some people avoid beans because of gas. Fortunately, you can reduce the gas causing *raffinose*, a natural sugar in beans, with careful rinsing. Rinse canned beans thoroughly before serving. Cover dried beans with 10 cups water, boil for 2-3 minutes; cover and soak overnight. Then, discard the water, along with most of the gas causing sugars.