

Singing the Praises of Beans

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EXTENSION

Lancaster County

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It's time to sing the praises of dry beans and NOT that song about, "Beans, beans, the musical fruit!" (More on that later ...)

Here are some high notes a song about beans would include:

- **Taste.** Cooked dry beans are a dietary staple in many parts of the world, and not just because of their low cost. They are featured in the traditional French cassoulet, a casserole of white beans, meats, vegetables and herbs. Louis Armstrong is said to have so loved red beans and rice that he ended some of his personal letters with "Red beans and ricely yours."
- **Convenience.** What could be more convenient than a can of cooked dry beans just waiting to be transformed into a dip, main dish, sandwich, soup, salad, or satisfying side dish! No refrigeration, peeling, or - depending on the recipe - additional cooking needed. "Canned beans may be stored up to 12 months in their original sealed cans," according to the American Dry Bean Board.
- **Cost.** A drained and rinsed 15- to 16-ounce can of cooked dried beans provides about three one-half cup servings or enough beans for two main dishes; the cost ranges from about \$1 to \$1.50 per can. Beans are frequently recommended as a nutrient-dense source of low-cost protein.
- **Weight management.** Beans have their place in weight management. Beans have a lower glycemic index which means they will have less impact on blood sugar levels. They also are high in fiber, which provides a sense of satiety or fullness that helps reduce food cravings.



Depending on variety, a half cup of cooked dry beans averages about 120 calories. This caloric level is only **six percent** of the **total** calories for a 2,000-calorie meal plan.

- **Heart health.** Beans provide heart-healthy amounts of folate, an essential nutrient that helps protect against heart disease.

Fiber, especially soluble fiber, may reduce our risk for heart disease by helping lower cholesterol. A half cup of cooked dry beans provides about 6 grams of fiber, of which 2 grams is soluble fiber. The recommended daily intake of total fiber is 14 grams per 1,000 calories or 28 grams for a 2,000-calorie meal plan.

Beans contain NO cholesterol, are virtually fat free, and unless sodium is added during canning or cooking, are low in sodium.

- **Cancer.** The folate, fiber and low glycemic index of beans also may help lower the risk of cancer.



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- **Diabetes management.** Beans' fiber and low glycemic index can help persons with diabetes maintain normal blood glucose levels and a healthy body weight, both important in the control of diabetes.
- **Healthy pregnancies.** Folate in beans is especially beneficial to women of child-bearing age. Folate may help reduce the risk of birth defects like spina bifida (a potentially crippling defect) and anencephaly (a fatal defect where a part of the brain never develops). Since a woman may not realize she is pregnant during the early weeks of pregnancy, all women of childbearing age are advised to get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folate daily. (NOTE: the term “folic acid” refers to the synthetic form of folate found in supplements and added to fortified foods.)

The following chart, courtesy of the U.S. Dry Bean Council <www.beansforhealth.com> summarizes the nutrient profile for one cup of cooked dry beans.

Nutrient Profile for Cooked Dry Beans

1 Cup Cooked Beans	Baby Lima	Black	Blackeye	Cranberry	Garbanzo	Great Northern	Large Lima	Navy	Pink	Pinto	Red Kidney	Small Red
Calories	230	228	200	240	270	209	216	258	252	239	225	226
Carbo-hydrates	42g	40g	36g	44g	45g	37g	40g	48g	47g	42g	40g	40g
Protein	15g	15g	13g	17g	15g	15g	15g	16g	15g	16g	16g	16g
Dietary Fiber	14g	15g	11g	18g	13g	13g	13g	12g	9g	14g	13g	8g
Folate	274mcg	256mcg	358mcg	366mcg	282mcg	181mcg	156mcg	255mcg	284mcg	294mcg	230mcg	230mcg
Calcium	52mg	46mg	41mg	88mg	80mg	120mg	32mg	127mg	88mg	72mg	50mg	50mg
Iron	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	5mg	6mg
Fat	1g	1g	1g	1g	4g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g
% Calories from Fat	6%	8%	10%	6%	28%	6%	6%	8%	6%	6%	2%	6%
Sodium	5mg	2mg	6mg	1mg	11mg	4mg	4mg	2mg	3mg	19mg	4mg	4mg

Source: Courtesy of the U.S. Dry Bean Council www.beansforhealth.com

For an extensive list of helpful bean-related links for consumers and health professionals,” visit the Beans for Health Web site www.beansforhealth.com

Ready to start singing about beans? Here are answers to some commonly asked questions about beans, plus eight delicious bean recipes.

What amount of beans should we eat to gain their health benefits?

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend a weekly consumption of 3 cups of legumes for a 2,000-calorie diet. Dry beans are one of the most common types of legumes. Their kidney or oval shape distinguishes them from other legume such as peas, which are round, and lentils, which are flat and disk-like. Dry beans are available both in the dry form in sealed bags and precooked in cans.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Guide includes dry beans both with high-protein foods such as lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs and nuts, and with the vegetable group. The same three cups of legumes can't be counted toward BOTH groups at the same time. (Source: www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines)

The Dietary Guidelines define the following as “serving sizes” for cooked dry beans for a 2,000-calorie diet:

- **Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts group:** 5.5 ounce-equivalents (based on the amount of protein found in one ounce of lean meat, poultry and fish) are recommended daily from this group. One-fourth cup cooked dry beans counts as one 1 ounce-equivalent.
- **Vegetable group:** 2.5 1/2-cups of vegetables are recommended daily.

Aren't dry beans considered an “incomplete” source of protein?

Beans are sometimes referred to as an “incomplete” protein since they don't provide one of the essential amino acids needed from food for building protein in the body. In actual practice, this isn't a concern. Grains (which lack a different essential amino acid) provide the amino acid missing from dry beans and vice versa. Together, they complement each other. Examples of complementary protein include beans and rice, a bean burrito (beans in a tortilla), and beans and corn. For non-vegetarians, the protein in dry beans also can be complemented by serving beans with a small amount of animal protein such as meat, poultry, seafood, dairy or eggs.

It is no longer considered necessary to eat complementary sources of protein together at the same time. Just consume them over the course of a day.

How do canned beans compare to dry-packaged beans?

Canned beans are convenient since they don't have to be presoaked and cooked. They can be eaten straight from the can or heated in recipes. According to the American Dry Bean Board, one 15-ounce can of beans equals one and one-half cups of cooked dry beans, drained. For most recipes, one form of beans can be substituted for the other.

Unless canned without salt, precooked canned beans generally are higher in sodium than dry-packaged beans. Always thoroughly drain and rinse canned beans in a colander or strainer under cold running water before using them in a recipe. This may help lower the amount of any added salt and may help remove some of their potential gas-producing properties.

Transfer any unused beans from the can and store in a covered container in the refrigerator; use within three days or freeze and use within six months. If beans have been combined with other ingredients in a recipe, use them within 2 days for best quality and safety, or freeze for later use.

How do you cook dry-packaged beans?

The U.S. Dry Bean Council provides detailed instructions for cooking beans from scratch at www.beansforhealth.com

What can you do if dry beans give you “gas”?

Some ways to minimize the gaseous or “musical fruit” effect include:

- Discard the soaking water when preparing dry beans from scratch and rinse beans thoroughly before cooking them.

- Gradually increase the amount and frequency of beans in your diet. This will give your body a chance to adjust to them. For example, start with one-fourth cup of beans sprinkled on top of a salad or added to a serving of soup.
- Try Beano™, a non-prescription product available in the pharmacy section of many stores. It contains an enzyme that breaks down the gas-producing substances in beans. Beano™ is available in liquid and tablet form and is used immediately before consuming beans.

As with adding all types of fiber to your diet, drink plenty of fluids and maintain regular physical activity. This helps your gastrointestinal system handle the increased fiber.

Can one dry bean be substituted for another bean in recipes?

For the most part, any canned or dry-packaged bean variety can be substituted for another, according to the American Dry Bean Board. All types of beans blend well with a variety of foods and spices as they absorb flavors from other ingredients. Cooking times may differ if substituting one type of dry-packaged bean for another.

The following pictures and descriptions from the CDC/NCCDPH <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/beans.html> will help you “use your bean” in selecting beans to try and to substitute.



Adzuki Beans are small, with a vivid red color, solid flavor and texture. Originally from Asia, its name means “little bean” in Japanese. Its red coloring - red being the most important color in Eastern celebrations - means that it is greatly used in festive or special meals.



Large Lima Beans are large and flat with a greenish-white color. The bean has a buttery flavor and creamy texture. This bean is named after Lima, Peru, and is extremely popular in the Americas, both in its natural state and dried.



Pink Beans have beautiful pink color and are very popular in the countries of the Caribbean. Pink beans are of medium size (similar to the Great Northern and the Pinto) and have a refined texture and delicate flavor.



Green Baby Lima Beans come from Peru and are very popular in the Americas. The baby variety is much loved in Japan for making desserts from bean paste known as “an.” These are medium-sized flat beans with a greenish white color, buttery flavor, and creamy texture.



Small Red Beans are particularly popular in the Caribbean region, where they normally are eaten with rice. Dark red in color, small red beans also are smoother in taste and texture than the dark red kidney bean.



Dark Red Kidney Beans are large and kidney-shaped with a deep, glossy red color. They have a solid flavor and texture. These beans are produced mainly in the northern U.S.A. and owe their popularity in America and Europe to the bean's large size, bright color and solid texture.



Black Beans are sweet tasting with an almost mushroom-like flavor and soft, floury texture. These beans are medium sized, oval, with a matt black color. They are the most popular beans in the Costa Rica and Cuba.



Light Red Kidney Beans have a solid texture and flavor. They are characterized by their large, kidney shape and a pink color. This bean is popular in the Caribbean region, Portugal and Spain because of similarity to the canela bean.



Navy Beans are small, white and oval with a refined texture and delicate flavor. These are the beans used for the famous Boston- and English-baked beans because their skin and fine texture do not break up on cooking. These beans were named for their part of the U.S. Navy diet during the second half of the 19th Century.



Cranberry Beans are known for their creamy texture with a flavor similar to chestnuts. Cranberry beans are rounded with red specks, which disappear on cooking. These beans are a favorite in northern Italy and Spain. You can find them fresh in their pods in autumn. They freeze well.



Black-eyed Beans have a scented aroma, creamy texture and distinctive flavor. These beans are characterized by their kidney shape, white skin with a small black eye, and very fine wrinkles. Originally from Africa, it is one of the most widely dispersed beans in the world. Black-eyed beans are really a type of pea, which gives it its distinctive flavor and rapid cooking potential, with no pre-soaking needed.



Pinto Beans are the most widely produced bean in the United States and one of the most popular in the Americas. Pinto beans contain the most fiber of all beans. Characteristically known for their medium-size, oval shape, they are speckled reddish brown over a pale pink base with solid texture and flavor.



Great Northern Beans are a North American bean, popular in France for making cassoulet (a white bean casserole) and in the whole Mediterranean where many beans of a similar appearance are cultivated. These beans have a delicate flavor and thin skin. They are and are flat, kidney-shaped, medium-sized white beans.



Garbanzo Beans or chickpeas are the most widely consumed legume in the world. Originating in the Middle East, they have a firm texture with a flavor somewhere between chestnuts and walnuts. Garbanzo beans are usually pale yellow in color. In India there are red, black, and brown chickpeas.

RECIPES

Here is a sampling of recipes to get you started cooking with beans. They illustrate the many ways beans can be used in meals.

Black Beans with Corn and Tomatoes

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two vegetable servings

- 1 (15-ounce) can low-sodium, no-fat-added black beans
- 1 cup cut tomatoes, fresh or canned
- 1 teaspoon fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 clove garlic, pureed or roasted
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper or more to taste

1. Drain and rinse beans.
2. In a bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes and garlic.
3. Add parsley, pepper and chili powder. Combine and serve.



Red beans were substituted for the black beans in this example

Nutrition Facts per serving: calories, 260; protein, 10g; fat, 2g; percent calories from fat, 7%; carbohydrates, 50 g; cholesterol, 0 mg; fiber, 8g; sodium, 430 mg

SOURCE: Courtesy of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information and recipes for adding fruits and vegetables to your diet, visit www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5ADay/month

ALICE'S TIPS FOR THIS RECIPE:

1. This recipe may be enjoyed as four side-dish/salad servings or two main-dish servings.
2. Chili powders can vary in intensity. You may wish to start with less chili powder if using a medium hot or hot form rather than regular chili powder. Sample the recipe and adjust according to personal preference.
3. Too much cayenne pepper can make food fiery hot; however, a dash can boost the flavor of dishes and enhance the taste of low-fat, low-salt recipes. Store cayenne pepper away from heat and light in a cool, dark and dry place.
4. Yellow corn is a source of lutein and zeaxanthin. These antioxidants may help reduce the risk of developing age-related diseases of the eyes such as cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Age-related macular degeneration is the leading cause of severe vision loss or legal blindness in people over the age of 60 in the

United States. Other sources of lutein and zeaxanthin include green leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale and collard greens.

5. To thaw frozen corn quickly, place it in a colander, run cold water over it for about 30 seconds or until thawed, and shake off the excess water.
6. Tomatoes provide lycopene, an antioxidant that may help lower the risk of prostate cancer and cardiovascular disease. Some research indicates lycopene is absorbed better in the presence of a little fat. If there are no other sources of fat in the foods served in combination with this dish, you may wish to add a couple of teaspoons of olive oil to this recipe.
7. If you don't have a garlic press to puree the garlic, mince the garlic really fine. Some cooks will use the flat end of a chef's knife to help mash the garlic; watch out for your fingers if you use this method!
8. As a substitution for fresh garlic, use 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder.
9. Store fresh garlic in a cool, dark place other than the refrigerator. Many people use the small clay garlic holders to keep garlic for several weeks. Though cloves that have sprouted are still safe to use, their flavor will be less strong than fresh cloves.
10. Other types of beans may be substituted for the black beans in this recipe.

One-Dish Rosemary Chicken and White Beans

Makes 4 servings

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1-1/2 teaspoons dried rosemary
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 8 skinless and boneless chicken thighs (about 1 pound)
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (15-ounce) can navy beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup pitted kalamata olives, chopped



1. Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Combine rosemary, salt and pepper; sprinkle over one side of chicken.
3. Place chicken in pan with seasoned side down, cook 3 minutes.
4. Reduce heat to medium and turn chicken. Add tomatoes and beans, cover and simmer 10 minutes or until chicken is done.
5. Stir in olives.

Nutrition Facts. Serving Size: 2 thighs and 3/4 cup bean mixture. Amount per serving: calories, 316; calories from fat, 23; total fat, 8.1 g; cholesterol, 94 mg; sodium, 978 mg; total carbohydrate, 30.2 g; dietary Fiber, 6.8 g; sugars, not applicable; protein, 31.2 g

SOURCE: Courtesy of the Idaho Bean Commission, P.O. Box 2556, Boise, ID 83701. For more information about cooking with beans, visit www.state.id.us/bean

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. To lower the sodium, use a no-salt-added bean and omit the 1/4 teaspoon of salt.

2. Sprinkle the seasonings on the side of the chicken thighs that will be the “presentation” side when this dish is served. NOTE: The seasoned side will first be placed down in the pan, then turned and become the presentation side after it is browned.
3. Olives combine well with white beans and only add about 10 calories per olive! If you have purchased kalamata olives with pits, here are two of the most common suggestions for removing the pits.
 - If you already have a cherry pitter, you might try this on your olives. This is the easiest method for pitting olives. Cherry/olive pitters are available in the kitchen gadgets section of many stores. Or, you can search for a source on the Internet by putting the words “cherry/olive pitter” into your favorite search engine.
 - A second method is to use a rolling pin to lightly roll over olives to loosen the pits. Then pick out the pits. The resulting pitted olive may not look as good with this method as when you use a cherry/olive pitter.
4. You can use an instant-read thermometer to test if the chicken is done. The recommended temperature for chicken thighs is 170 F.

Italian White Bean Soup

Makes 4 servings

Part of the beans and liquid in this soup is pureed to make a thicker, creamy texture.



- 2 (15.5-ounce) cans white kidney beans (cannellini) or Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
 - 4 cups non-fat, reduced sodium chicken broth, divided
 - 1/2 cup chopped onion
 - 3 cloves garlic, minced
 - 1 (16-ounce) can whole tomatoes with no salt, undrained OR 4 to 6 fresh plum tomatoes, peeled and chopped
 - 2 teaspoons dried basil
 - 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
 - 1/8 teaspoon white pepper
1. Combine one can of beans with two cups of the broth in a blender or food processor and blend until a smooth puree.
 2. Transfer to a large saucepan. Stir in remaining ingredients.
 3. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, about 10 to 15 minutes, or until beans and tomatoes reach desired tenderness.

Nutritional Facts per serving: 203 calories; 1 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat); 37 g carbohydrate; 12 g protein; 10 g dietary fiber; 744 mg sodium.

SOURCE: Courtesy of American Institute for Cancer Research. For more information about diet and cancer prevention, visit www.aicr.org

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. Black pepper has a slightly hotter flavor than white pepper, which has a milder, more delicate flavor. White pepper comes from the same plant and is left on the vine longer. Appearance is the reason white pepper is

included in many recipes. For convenience, I used black pepper in this recipe and found it acceptable in flavor and appearance.

2. Rather than using whole canned tomatoes and chopping them, you might use diced tomatoes.
3. If you don't have dried basil, *Food FAQ's: Substitutions, Yields & Equivalents* suggests substituting either thyme or oregano, starting with half the quantity specified for basil and then adding more, if necessary, to taste.
4. To store any extra hot soup, transfer it to a shallow container to speed cooling. Limit depth of soup to two inches or less. Refrigerate perishable foods, such as soup, so the TOTAL time they are at room temperature is less than TWO hours. You can place loosely covered foods in the refrigerator while still warm; cover tightly when food is completely cooled.

Hummus

Makes 4 servings

Serve hummus as a dip with fresh cut vegetables such as carrots, or serve with crackers. Hummus also works well as a sandwich spread, in pita bread and spread in wraps. Some possible additions to hummus sandwiches are grated carrots, sliced or chopped tomatoes, salad greens, chopped or sliced red or green pepper.



- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
 - 1 tablespoon olive oil
 - 1 tablespoon white wine or cider vinegar; OR 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 - 1 clove garlic, minced
 - 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 - 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
 - Dash cayenne
 - 1/4 to 1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt
 - 1/4 cup chopped parsley
1. Place all ingredients except yogurt and parsley in a food processor.
 2. Add 1/4 cup of the yogurt and blend until smooth. Add more yogurt, if necessary, until desired consistency is achieved.
 3. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the parsley.
 4. Eat within two days for best quality and safety. Avoid letting hummus sit at room temperature for more than two hours, TOTAL TIME.

SOURCE: Recipe and photo by author.

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. As a substitute for fresh garlic, use 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder.
2. Garbanzo beans also are referred to as chickpeas.

Southwestern Black Bean Salad

Makes 4 main-dish servings

Beans of all varieties are a natural as tasty additions to salads. This salad is substantial enough to serve as a light main dish.

- 1/2 cup light ranch dressing
- 1 large tomato, cut into bite-size wedges
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped or cut into strips
- 1 shallot, chopped, OR 4 green onions (including stem), sliced
- 1 package (5-ounces) salad greens
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, regular or reduced fat, coarsely shredded
- Black pepper, to taste

1. In a large bowl, combine all salad ingredients (EXCEPT cheese and black pepper) with ranch dressing.
2. Divide between large salad plates and top with cheese. Pass black pepper, preferably in a pepper grinder, so people can grind their own.

SOURCE: Recipe and photo by author.

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. Approximately 8 cups of salad greens may be substituted for the package of salad greens.
2. To thaw frozen corn quickly, place it in a colander, run cold water over it for about 30 seconds or until thawed and shake off the excess water.

Speedy Pork Cassoulet

Serves four

Cassoulet, a hearty Southwestern French white bean and meat stew, offers a harmony of flavors. This “quickest” version can be fixed for a weeknight supper. Serve with crusty French rolls and greens tossed with garlic vinaigrette.

- 3 boneless pork chops, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 (15-ounce) cans great Northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 3/4 cup chicken broth
- 1/3 cup chopped sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil, drained
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley



- 1/4 cup seasoned bread crumbs
1. Heat oil in a deep saucepan over medium-high heat.
 2. Cook and stir onions and garlic until tender but not brown.
 3. Add pork, cook and stir for 2-3 minutes or until lightly browned.
 4. Stir in beans, broth, tomatoes, rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper. Bring to boiling; reduce heat, cover and simmer 10 minutes or just until pork is tender, stirring occasionally.
 5. Spoon cassoulet into individual soup bowls. Sprinkle each serving with parsley and bread crumbs.

Nutrition Facts per serving. Calories, 340 calories; Protein, 26 grams; Fat, 11 grams; Sodium, 610 milligrams; Cholesterol, 40 milligrams; Saturated Fat, 2 grams; Carbohydrates, 37 grams

SOURCE: Recipe and photo courtesy of National Pork Board. For more information about The Other White Meat, visit TheOtherWhiteMeat.com

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. Check on the label, Web site or with the manufacturer as to how long sun-dried tomatoes in oil will keep if you plan to hold them — opened in the refrigerator — longer than a few days. For example, when I checked the Web site of one popular brand, the site advised using their product within two weeks once opened, and storing it in the refrigerator.

Other uses for sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil include: mixed with pasta, potato and macaroni salads, served on crackers with cream cheese, mixed with mashed potatoes. NOTE: The olive oil will harden after it is refrigerated, but will liquefy again at room temperature.

To freeze extra sun-dried tomatoes in oil, use the “plop method” — like when making baby food. Drop by tablespoons on a sheet of waxed or parchment paper or plastic wrap on a metal baking sheet or pan. Freeze until solid and transfer to a freezer bag. Use individual “plops” as needed. For best flavor, use within a few months. Label the date put in the freezer. NOTE: Occasionally when aluminum foil comes in contact with a highly acidic food, small, harmless pinholes are formed in the foil. For this reason, it's not recommended to place “plops” on aluminum foil.

Another option is to buy plain sun-dried tomatoes or red-dried tomatoes that must be rehydrated before use. Rehydrate according to package directions. A common, quick method is to pour boiling water over them until the beans are covered, and let them soften in the water for about two to five minutes.

2. If you need to lower the sodium in this recipe, omit the salt and use beans canned without salt, as well as low-sodium chicken broth.
3. Any extra chicken broth may be frozen in ice cube trays and transferred to freezer bags for use as needed. Or, a low-sodium chicken bouillon may be used.
4. Rather than using seasoned bread crumbs, I crushed some whole grain crackers to sprinkle over the servings.

Three Bean Pasta

Serves 4-6

Beans are a natural combination with pasta and can be served as a main dish salad. Here's a sample recipe from the National Pasta Association. It's easy to create your own — just combine beans, veggies, pasta and your favorite salad dressing. Refrigerate for about an hour to allow flavors to blend. ENJOY!



- 1 pound medium or wide egg noodles, uncooked
 - 1 15-oz. can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
 - 1 15-oz. can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
 - 1 cup frozen green beans, thawed
 - 1 small red onion, chopped
 - 1 red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
 - 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 - 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
 - 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
 - 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
1. Prepare pasta according to package directions; drain. Rinse under cold water and drain again.
 2. In a large bowl, stir together the pasta, kidney beans, chickpeas, green beans, onion and bell pepper. In a small bowl, stir together the remaining ingredients.
 3. Toss pasta with dressing and serve.

Nutrition Facts per serving: calories, 374; protein, 14.7 g; carbohydrates, 59.6 g; fat, 9.3 g; cholesterol, 0 mg

SOURCE: Recipe courtesy of National Pasta Organization. For more information about pasta, visit www.ilovepasta.org

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. To thaw frozen green beans quickly, place them in a colander, run cold water over them for about 30 seconds or until thawed, and shake off the excess water.
2. For added fiber, use whole grain pasta.
3. If time allows — before serving, chill this pasta dish in the refrigerator for an hour or more to allow flavors to blend.
4. Use a melon baller to quickly scrape away the seeds and ribs of the red pepper.
5. According to the National Pasta Organization (www.ilovepasta.org), one pound of dry noodles will produce a cooked amount of 5 cups. Other pasta shapes may be substituted for the pound of noodles — however, a different amount (about 10 ounces) is needed as one pound of macaroni, spaghetti, penne, etc. equals 8 cups cooked volume.
6. Eat within two days of preparation for best quality and safety. Avoid letting the salad sit at room temperature for more than two hours, TOTAL time.

Mexican Skillet Rice

Makes 6 servings

- 1 pound lean ground beef or turkey
 - 1 medium onion, chopped
 - 2 tablespoons chili powder
 - 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 3 cups cooked brown rice
 - 1 16-ounce can pinto beans, drained
 - 2 4-ounce cans diced green chiles
 - 1 medium fresh tomato, seeded and chopped (optional)
 - Fresh cilantro for garnish (optional)
1. In large skillet over medium-high heat, cook meat until brown, stirring to crumble; drain. Return meat to skillet.
 2. Add onion, chili powder, cumin and salt; cook until onion is tender.
 3. Stir in rice, beans and chiles; thoroughly heat.
 4. Top with tomato and garnish with cilantro if desired. Serve immediately.



Nutrition Facts per serving: Calories, 313; Total Fat, 9g; Cholesterol, 29 mg; Sodium, 340 mg; Total Carbohydrate, 43 g; Dietary Fiber, 6 g; Protein, 17 g

SOURCE: Recipe and photo courtesy of the USA Rice Federation. For more information about rice, visit www.usarice.com

ALICE'S TIPS FOR ABOVE RECIPE:

1. If you cry when working with onions, here's why: "The tearjerker in onions is a compound called propanethial-s-oxide, which is released in a vapor when onions are cut," according to Cheryl Forberg, professional chef, registered dietitian and author of *Stop the Clock! Cooking* <www.cherylforberg.com>. "When the vapor comes in contact with the eye, it is converted to a form of sulfuric acid, which produces the stinging sensation and subsequent tears. Cutting onions under water or chilling them before cutting, will retard the enzymes that generate the noxious chemicals."

Some other suggestions people have mentioned include:

- Keep the root on while peeling and chopping. A variation of this is to cut from the top, leaving the root end intact until the last cut.
- Be in a well-ventilated place and cut fast.
- Use a good, sharp chef's knife. It glides through the onion with ease, allowing less of the compounds that cause tears to come out.
- Wear a pair of safety goggles or a cheap, disposable painter's mask.
- Put some white vinegar on the chopping board before cutting.

- Burn a candle immediately adjacent to where you're cutting. The tear-causing gas is drawn toward the heat source.
- Purchase pre-chopped onions.

After cutting the onions (and after cutting garlic), one suggestion that may help remove the smell from your hands is to run cool tap water over your hands while rubbing them across a stainless steel utensil, such as the bowl of a stainless steel spoon. If you have been cutting a lot of onions, this may not be as effective.

2. If desired, lower the sodium further by cutting back or omitting the salt, especially if your beans are canned with salt.

Special thanks to ...

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