



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Dried beans are harvested from August through October in the Midwest. A fresh crop is in the bag! Seems odd but dried beans can get stale. It's best to use beans from the most recent harvest to ensure they soften evenly without prolonged cooking time. Pinto beans are just one of many types of dried beans grown in Michigan's vast farmlands. Pintos take their name from the Spanish word for painted. These pale pink beans have tiny little brushstrokes of reddish-brown color. The paint strokes disappear into the cooking liquid leaving you with plain beans in a rich, colorful broth.

Canned beans are fine, but there's nothing like beans cooked from dried. Yes, dried beans do take time to prepare, but not much of it is hands-on work. One pound of dried beans yields 6 cups of cooked beans, the equivalent of 3 to 4 cans of beans.

Brining, a method described by Cooks Illustrated, will take your cooked beans to a whole new level with tender skins and creamy texture. Begin with 1 pound of dried beans, sorted (remove broken beans and stones) and rinsed. Dissolve 3 tablespoons of salt in 4 quarts of water; add the beans and soak for 8 to 24 hours. Drain and rinse well before cooking.

Pressure cooking brined beans is super quick. Add beans, 6 cups water, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil, and aromatics (bay leaf, onions, garlic, peppers) as desired, to the pressure cooker. It takes just 15 minutes at high pressure. Follow instructions in your pressure cooker manual. Remove what you need for your recipe and freeze the extra beans and broth in zipper-lock freezer bags.

Renowned in Southwestern cuisine, pintos are the go-to bean for the classic cowhand meal of bean soup and cornbread. What's leftover in the bean pot can be mashed and reheated for refried beans. Another classic, Chef's recipe for traditional beans and rice featuring Latin flavors.

RECIPE for health

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featured food:

PINTO BEANS

Latin Red Pinto Beans & Rice

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services
Serves 6-8

- 4 slices of bacon (optional)
- 2 T. olive oil
- 1 1/2 c. medium dice onion
- 1 c. medium dice red pepper
- 1 jalapeño, seeds and veins removed, small dice
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 T. tomato paste
- 1/2 c. red wine
- 3 c. chicken broth or broth from bean pot
- 1 1/2 T. vinegar
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 t. dried oregano
- 1 T. ground cumin
- 1/2 t. smoked paprika
- 2 c. white rice, long or medium grain
- 2 cans red pinto beans, drained and rinsed well or 3 cups cooked beans
- 3 T. chopped cilantro
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 c. sliced green onions

Slice bacon into 1/4 inch strips; cook in a large pot with olive oil until bacon is cooked and crisp. Remove bacon and set aside for garnish. Add onion and peppers to the pot; sauté for 5 minutes over medium heat. Add garlic and tomato paste; sauté an additional 2 minutes.

Deglaze pot with wine. Add broth, vinegar, bay leaf, oregano, cumin, and paprika; mix well. Then stir in rice and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover pot, and let cook for 15 minutes. Stir in beans, cover and let cook for additional 20 minutes. Add cilantro, taste, and season with salt and pepper. Garnish with crisp bacon and green onions.

Chef Kurt was inspired by the flavors of Latin cuisine while studying at the [Culinary Institute of America](#) in San Antonio, Texas. He tasted many frijoles and rice dishes, a mealtime mainstay in the area. This recipe takes on the style of jambalaya, popular at Chef's house on a cool fall day.

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- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.