



RECIPE for health

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featured food:

DRIED BEANS

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Cooking dried beans can be tricky. The length of time required to cook them depends on at least three factors: age of the beans, altitude where you live, and hardness of the cooking water. Try these problem-solving strategies:

1. Use "fresh" dried beans. The shelf life of dried beans is not forever. Even though they don't spoil, old or stale beans will not cook to a soft creamy texture. When buying dried beans avoid packages with beans that are chipped or cracked, or that contain a powdery dust—all signs of old beans. Protect beans from humidity by storing them in airtight containers. Use up your bean supply annually.
2. Not much you can do about your altitude but you can change your cooking method. A pressure cooker is the perfect solution. Soaked beans cooked at high pressure are done in about 25 minutes. Or slow cook soaked beans for about 6 to 8 hours.
3. Hard water can be remedied by adding salt to your soaking water. Salt keeps minerals in the water from attaching to the bean skins and making them tough. For one pound of beans, dissolve 3 tablespoons of salt in 4 quarts of water. Soak the beans for 8 hours. Drain, rinse and cook using fresh water.

If you do all of the above and your beans still don't soften, it's time to think about the chemistry going on in the pot. An acid ingredient such as tomatoes, vinegar or wine added before the beans are softened will keep them from cooking to full tenderness. On the other side of the pH equation, the addition of an alkali such as baking soda will break down the cell structure of the beans. But use it sparingly—no more than 1/8 teaspoon per pound of beans. Too much will destroy nutrients and result in mushy beans.

Do tender beans really deserve all this attention? You bet! Tender beans are pleasant to eat—and more importantly, easier to digest.

White Bean Hummus

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services.

- 1-15 ounce can (1 1/2 cups) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
Or 1/2 cup dried beans, cooked and drained
- 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- 1 1/2 to 2 Tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce such as sriracha hot chili sauce
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat leaf parsley
- Salt to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Hummus is usually made with chickpeas. Here, we use cannellini beans for a change of flavor and a creamier texture. Other white beans may be substituted. Great Northern beans have the same flavor as cannellini beans although the texture won't be as smooth.

Put beans, garlic, lemon juice, vinegar, mustard and hot sauce into a food processor and blend until smooth. Slowly add olive oil and continue to blend for 30 seconds.

Scrape bean mixture into a bowl and fold in parsley. Taste; adjust seasoning with salt and pepper as needed.

Try **White Bean Hummus** for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on January 29.