



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Had Jack's beanstalk not been chopped, he might have seen yardlong beans dangling from the vine. These fast growing bean pods will gain several inches in length on a warm summer day. While they are long, yard long may be a bit of a stretch. Consumers prefer yardlong beans when the pods are 10 to 20 inches in length and about as thick as a pencil. By the time they're 3 feet long, the once-edible pods have become swollen with "shellies," that is, mature edible beans inside the pods, good only for shelling.

Yardlong beans go by various names including Chinese long beans, asparagus beans, garter beans, and snake beans. Like snap green beans and string beans, yardlong beans are the immature pods of vining plants. As such, they look quite a lot alike. But that's where the similarities end. Set your expectations for an entirely different vegetable. They have a mild asparagus flavor and their texture tends to be dry, not sweet and juicy like typical green beans.

Select flexible, bright green bean pods that are half-a-yard long more or less, nice and smooth without the bumps and bulges that are a sure sign of maturing beans inside the pods. Even when fresh, limpness and wrinkles are to be expected. They'll keep five days if stored in a zipper-lock bag in your refrigerator's vegetable drawer.

To prepare yardlong beans, wash and dry them, then lay them out nice and straight, side-by-side for ease in cutting into uniform lengths. From there, unlike typical green beans that need blanching, steaming, or boiling, yardlong beans prefer to never touch cooking water. Great for stir fries, they are a veritable staple in Asian cuisine. A classic preparation method is to deep-fry them first, then add them back to the stir-fry pot with a sauce made of stock or coconut milk. They turn an enticing dark green when cooked.

RECIPE for health

OCTOBER 2015

featured food:

YARDLONG BEANS

Thai Braised Yardlong Beans

- 2 T. canola oil
- 1 lb. Yardlong beans, trimmed and cut into 2" pieces
- ½ c. julienne cut onion
- ½ c. match stick carrot
- 2 Thai peppers, sliced thin
- 2 c. thin sliced Napa cabbage
- 1 T. minced fresh ginger
- 1 T. minced fresh garlic
- 2 c. vegetable broth
- 2 T. fish sauce
- 3 T. soy sauce
- 1 T. rice wine vinegar
- 2 T. chopped fresh cilantro
- Black pepper as needed
- 2 T. chopped roasted cashews

Heat a large braising pan or a large heavy skillet over medium high heat; add oil. Once oil is hot add beans and onions and sauté for 5 minutes. Add carrots, peppers, and cabbage; sauté an additional 2 minutes. Add ginger and garlic; sauté for an additional minute, always stirring.

Deglaze pan with vegetable broth and bring to a low boil, reduce heat to simmer and add fish sauce, and soy sauce. Simmer for 10-12 minutes or until beans are tender.

Remove from heat. Add vinegar and cilantro. Taste and adjust seasoning with soy sauce and black pepper as needed. Garnish with cashews and serve.

Serves 4.

Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski was inspired by a Thai dish called Stir-fried Long Beans with Basil he enjoyed at [Naing Myanmar Family Restaurant](#). Blending sautéed yardlong beans with Asian Braised Cabbage, a dish he originally prepared at Lansing's Farmers Market at the Capitol, makes this recipe extra-delicious. Chef Kurt is Executive Chef for MSU Residential Dining Services.

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.