Get on the Bean Bandwagon!
2016 Is International Year of Pulses

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The United Nations (UN) declared 2016 the International Year of Pulses. A “pulse” is the edible seed of certain legumes such as dry beans, peas and lentils. Pulses were chosen, according to the UN, to “heighten public awareness of their nutritional benefits as part of sustainable food production aimed toward food security and nutrition.”

Cooked dry beans are an excellent source of fiber, potassium and folate. One-fourth cup of cooked beans counts as a one ounce-equivalent in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Protein Food Group. Other protein foods include meat, poultry, seafood, dry peas, lentils, eggs, processed soy products, nuts and seeds. As an illustration: 1/2 cup of cooked beans and 2 ounces of cooked meat would both be counted as 2 ounce-equivalents of protein.

Some bean facts:
• A 15-ounce can of beans provides about three 1/2-cup servings of beans.
• One pound of dry edible beans yields about 6 cups of cooked beans.
• The cost of a 15-ounce can of beans ranges from about 33–67 cents per 1/2-cup serving, depending on whether people buy the store brand instead of the national brand.
• A half cup of dry beans, cooked from scratch, costs about 17 cents.
• One type of bean can usually be substituted for another type in recipes. Taste and color may vary slightly.

If you’ve avoided cooking dry beans from scratch because “it takes too long,” consider the actual “hands-on” time can be just minutes!
All it takes is a little planning ahead for a time to soak the beans and a time to cook them. The following directions, adapted from information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission, will help you get started.

There are two steps to cooking beans — soaking and cooking:
• Soaking beans allows the dried beans to absorb water, which begins to dissolve the starches that cause intestinal discomfort. While beans are soaking they are also doubling to tripling in their size.
• Cooking the beans makes them edible and digestible.

To quickly drain beans, cook them in a pot in which a pasta strainer has been placed.

Soaking Beans
(Note: Lentils, split peas and black-eyed peas do not need to be soaked.)
Pick through the beans, discarding any discolored or shriveled beans or any foreign matter. Rinse well.

Soak with one of these methods:
• Hot Soak or Quick Soak. “Hot soaking” helps dissolve some of the gas-causing substances in beans and most consistently produces tender beans. In a large pot, add 10 cups of water for each pound (2 cups) of dry beans. Heat to boiling; boil for 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and soak for at least 1 hour (Quick Soak) or up to 4 hours (Hot Soak).
• Traditional Overnight Soak. This is the easiest method. Place dry beans

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DID YOU KNOW PULSES MAKE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMY IN NEBRASKA?
We rank 1st in the nation in Great Northern bean production, 2nd for pinto and light red kidney beans and 3rd for all dry edible bean production. We produce equal to approximately 1 billion servings of dry beans a year.

Cooking Dry Beans from Scratch Can Be Quick

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in a large container; for each pound (2 cups) beans, add 10 cups of cold water. Cover and refrigerate 8 hours or overnight.

**Drain and rinse beans soaked by either method with fresh, cool water.**

**Cooking Beans**

Place beans in a large pot; cover with fresh water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer gently until beans are tender but firm.

Periodically, try a taste test or mash a bean against the side of the pot with a fork or spoon. Check occasionally if you need to add more water. Most beans will cook in 45 minutes to 2 hours.

Herbs and spices may be added any time; add salt when beans are tender as it tends to toughen them. Add acidic foods (lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, wine, etc.) after beans are cooked as these foods can prevent beans from becoming tender.

Refrigerate cooked beans in shallow pans if they are to be eaten later. Freeze any extra beans within 4 days after cooking them.

I created this basic recipe because regular refried beans often are so high in sodium and most recipes for refried beans are so complicated to make.

**QUICK REFRIED BEANS**

| 1 tablespoon oil |
| 1 garlic clove, minced |
| 1 can (15 ounce) no-salt-added pinto beans, drained and rinsed |
| 1/2 teaspoon cumin |
| 1/2 teaspoon chili powder |
| Salt to taste |

Add oil to medium-sized skillet and heat over medium heat until the oil shimmers. Sauté garlic in oil until just browned. Stir in pinto beans, cumin and chili powder. Cook until beans are heated throughout, about 5 minutes. Stir occasionally.

Smash bean mixture with a potato masher or fork until desired texture. With a spoon, stir in water, a small amount at a time, to achieve desired consistency. Add salt “to taste.” Serve with baked chips or fresh vegetables.

This recipe is so easy to make and tastes great! Plus, with all the vegetables, you get lots of nutrients and fiber!

**CONFETTI BEAN SALSA**

Yield: 6 1/2-cup servings

| 1 can (15 ounce) black or red beans |
| 1 can (11 ounce) corn |
| 1 cup salsa |

1. Drain and rinse the beans. Drain the corn.

**Note:** Like it hot? Add a few drops of hot sauce or chopped green chilies. Try chopped cilantro, parsley or green pepper, too.

Alice’s Notes: You can substitute 1-1/2 cups of cooked dry beans for the can of beans and 1-1/4 cups of thawed frozen corn for the can of corn.

Adapted from: The Power of Choice, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA and Food and Drug Administration, DHHS. Author: USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).