

Serve a Variety of Dry Beans and Peas For Healthier School Meals



We know beans are good for us, but many people don't realize how delicious they taste! Beans are an inexpensive food that can boost the nutritional content of school meals. Beans are versatile, too. Whether served as a vegetarian option, or served with meats, poultry, fish, and cheese, beans complement the meal. Find creative ways to add more beans to school menus! For example, try savory pinto beans and salsa in a chef salad or add red beans to rice pilaf!

Dry beans and peas:

- are excellent sources of plant protein.
- are excellent sources of fiber.
- provide other nutrients such as iron, potassium, folate, and zinc.
- are naturally low in fat and sodium.
- have no saturated fat or cholesterol.

Dry beans and peas are available in dry, canned, and frozen forms. The term “dry beans and peas” refers to the harvesting process of allowing the bean or pea to “mature” or “dry” on the plant before harvesting; it does not refer to the “as-purchased” form of the bean.

The following is a list of dry beans and peas:

Black beans	Kidney beans	Pink beans	Split peas
Black-eye peas	Lentils	Pinto beans	
Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)	Lima beans, mature	Red beans	
Great Northern beans	Navy (Pea) beans	Soybeans, mature	

Beans and peas that are not allowed to mature on the plant before harvesting are often referred to as “immature” and do not qualify as dry beans or peas.

If a bean or pea is listed in the Meat/Meat Alternate section of the Food Buying Guide, the bean or pea is considered a mature, dry bean or pea. You may count a serving of cooked dry beans or peas as a meat alternate or a vegetable, but not as both components in the same meal.

Recipe for Success

- **Choose the easiest form!** Use canned, pre-cooked beans to simplify recipes (no soaking needed) and reduce cooking times.
- **Power up recipes** with more beans! Add dry-packaged or canned beans and peas when preparing casseroles, chili, stews, and side dishes.
- **Serve up your menus** with Southwest flair! Offer black bean enchiladas, low-fat refried beans, or tacos with whole pinto beans. A recipe for a Sante Fe Wrap made with black beans, corn, rice, and chicken can be found at www.recipesforkidschallenge.com/submissions/1130-sante-fe-wrap. This Recipes for Healthy Kids website includes recipes using dry beans and peas, as well as recipes using whole grains and dark green and orange vegetables.
- **Spruce up the salad bar!** Offer canned garbanzo beans, red kidney beans, or black beans.
- **Serve satisfying soups.** Attract students and teachers with low-sodium lentil, minestrone, or white bean soup.
- **Bring back a classic!** Pair baked beans as a side dish with oven-baked chicken to bring back memories of a summer cookout!
- **Try a great-tasting hummus dip** (made from pureed garbanzo beans) with vegetables or whole-wheat pita bread.

This fact sheet was adapted from the USDA fact sheet “Serve More Dry Beans and Peas for Healthier School Meals.” MyPlate is the new food icon from USDA.

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