



# Using Pinto Beans

Guide E-213

Revised by Martha Archuleta  
Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist



Cooperative Extension Service • College of Agriculture and Home Economics

This publication is scheduled to be updated and reissued 4/09.

The pinto bean, along with its other *Phaseolus vulgaris* cousins, is one of America's gifts to the world. Beans found in ancient caves in Mexico date back to 4000 BC. They are just as popular today as when introduced to Europeans by Columbus because of their flavor, cost, nutritional value and ease of preparation.

Few foods are as versatile as pinto beans. They can be served as appetizers, soups, salads, main dishes and breads. Even some cake, pie and candy recipes use cooked pinto beans.

## NUTRITIONAL VALUE

Pinto beans are a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals. One cup of pinto beans provides one quarter of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance of protein for adults. Supplementing the protein of pinto beans with a little meat, dairy products, rice or corn will provide all the essential amino acids. Because beans contain soluble fiber, they can lower blood cholesterol.



Pinto beans are a good source of energy and the B vitamins-thiamin, riboflavin and niacin-which are necessary for growth and tissue building. Minerals found in pinto beans include calcium, phosphorus, potassium and iron, all essential to good health. One-half cup of cooked pinto beans furnishes 118 calories. Beans are good for low-sodium diets as they contain only the salt added by the cook.

However, beans contain several complex carbohydrates that are not readily digested. To increase digestibility and reduce intestinal distress, discard the waters used for soaking and cooking because much of this indigestible carbohydrate dissolves into the water. Tests show no important amounts of essential nutrients are lost when the soaking and cooking waters are discarded.

## COOKING TECHNIQUES

Dry beans can be cooked quickly in a pressure saucepan or microwave oven, or they can be cooked slowly in a crockpot or a saucepan on top of the range.

Sort the beans to remove small stones, lumps of dirt and defective beans. Wash the beans with several changes of water.

Soak beans to reduce cooking time, using five cups of hot water to each cup of beans. For a quick soak, add beans to water in a saucepan, and bring to a boil for 2 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and let stand for one hour. For overnight soaking, cover beans with cold water and refrigerate.

Discard soaking water, replace with fresh water and cook the beans in one of the following ways. (Note: When cooking in the microwave oven, on top of the range or in a crockpot, never fill pan more than one-half full.)

**Pressure Saucepan:** Place beans and enough fresh water to cover the beans in a pressure saucepan. Add one teaspoon of vegetable oil to prevent foaming. Do not fill pan more than one-third full. Following saucepan instructions, cook beans at 15 pounds of pressure for 25 minutes. Reduce pressure by placing saucepan in a sink of cold water or under a thin stream of cool water.

**Microwave:** Place soaked and rinsed beans in fresh water and cook at full power for 8-10 minutes or until boiling; then cook at 50% power 15-20 minutes or until beans are tender. Follow instructions on pan if using a microwave pressure cooker.

**Saucepan:** Cover soaked, rinsed beans with fresh water and bring to a rapid boil; reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook until tender, but not mushy. Add water if necessary. The time will depend on hardness of water and altitude, usually 2 to 3 hours.

**Crockpot:** Follow manufacturer's directions. If directions are not available, add fresh water to soaked, rinsed beans, heat to boiling and reduce heat to simmer. Cook until tender, which may take 4 to 6 hours.

After cooking, drain cooking water, add either fresh water or chicken broth and heat to serving temperature.

#### TIPS TO SUCCESS

- To prevent skins from bursting, simmer gently and stir as little as possible.
- Increase cooking time in high altitude and hard water areas.
- Cook the full contents of smaller packages such as the one pound size. Refrigerate leftover cooked beans; drain cooked or canned beans before freezing. Store dry beans in airtight glass or metal containers in a cool place.
- Add 1/8th to 1/4th teaspoon of baking soda per cup of beans to shorten cooking time in hard water or use distilled water. Excess soda will cause an undesirable flavor and loss of nutrients.
- A teaspoon of sugar and a clove of garlic enhance the flavor of plain, cooked pinto beans.
- If a recipe calls for tomatoes, lemon juice, wine or vinegar, add when beans are almost tender. Acid delays softening.
- A 1-lb. pkg. of dry beans = 2 cups dry or 5-6 cups of cooked beans.



#### RECIPES



#### Frijoles Refritos - Refried Beans

Add one-half to one tablespoon of oil to three cups of cooked, mashed pinto beans in a large skillet. Mix well and cook, stirring until the desired consistency is obtained. Add more liquid if necessary. Serve as a side dish or use as a filling for bean burritos, tostadas or tacos.

#### Bean Tostados

12 six-inch tostadas or tortillas, fried crisp and flat or heated quickly in a 450°F oven  
4 cups refried beans  
3 cups shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese  
1 cup shredded lettuce  
1 large tomato, chopped  
1 medium avocado, peeled and cut into 12 wedges  
Salsa

Arrange tostadas in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Spoon one-third cup refried beans on each tostada. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Top each tostada with lettuce, tomato and avocado. Season with salsa if desired.

## Baked Pinto Beans

3 cups dry pinto beans  
1 medium onion  
3 cups of water or unsalted chicken stock  
2 level teaspoons salt  
1 heaping teaspoon prepared mustard  
1/4 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
1/3 cup molasses  
1/4 cup brown sugar  
1/8 pound bacon or salt pork

Cook soaked beans on low heat until tender. Drain and rinse beans. Slice onion in bottom of bean pot and add drained beans. Mix remaining ingredients, except meat, with water or chicken stock and pour over beans. Cut meat into small pieces and stir carefully into bean mixture. Place in 300°F oven and bake for 2 1/2 hours; uncover for the last half hour. Add water if necessary.



## Ensalada de Frijol - Pinto Bean Salad

2 cups cooked and rinsed pinto beans  
1/2 cup diced celery  
3 green chile peppers (canned or fresh)  
2 medium cucumber pickles, chopped  
1/2 small onion, chopped  
2 tablespoons prepared mustard  
4 tablespoons canned milk  
Salt  
Pepper

Mix all ingredients thoroughly except mustard and milk. Beat mustard and milk together. Add to the bean mixture. Serve on lettuce. Sprinkle top with red chile powder.

## Chuck Wagon Chow

1 pound beef chuck or round cut in 1-inch cubes  
2 tablespoons chile powder  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon salad oil  
1 cup chopped onion  
1 4-ounce can chopped green chile  
2 cups cooked and rinsed pinto beans  
1 can whole kernel corn

Sprinkle beef cubes with chili powder, salt and pepper. Slowly brown the meat and garlic in the salad oil in a large frying pan.

Add onions and green chile and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Stir often.

Drain pinto beans and corn; add liquid to meat mixture; cover; simmer 45 minutes or until meat is tender.

Add pinto beans and corn; cover and cook over low heat for 10 minutes. Stir often.



## Mock Pumpkin Pie

2 cups pinto bean puree\*  
3 eggs  
1 13-oz. can evaporated milk  
1 cup sugar  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 (9-inch) unbaked pie shell

\*Use tender cooked, unseasoned pinto beans. Rinse well and puree 2 cups beans with 1/4 to 1/2 cup water or chicken stock in a blender until smooth. Scrap down sides occasionally.

Mix remaining ingredients in order given. Pour into pie shell. Bake in preheated 425°F oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350° and continue baking for 45 minutes or until knife inserted in center of pie filling comes out clean. Cool. Garnish with whipped cream, if desired.



### Pinto Bean Fudge

- 1 cup warm cooked pinto beans
- 3/4 cup melted butter or margarine
- 1 cup cocoa
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 2 pounds powdered sugar
- 1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Mash or sieve beans. Add melted butter or margarine, cocoa and vanilla. Mix in powdered sugar gradually. Add nuts if desired. Press into a 9 x 13-inch oiled or nonstick pan. Store in the refrigerator.

*Original author: Mae Martha Johnson, with later contributions by Alice Jane Hendley, both former Extension Food and Nutrition Specialists*