

# The Secrets To Soaking & Cooking Beans

## **First Things First**

Inspect beans before soaking and discard any foreign objects -- like small stones or twigs -- as well as any broken beans. Place beans in a sieve or colander and rinse thoroughly in cold water.

## **Why Soak?**

Soaking softens and returns moisture to dry-packaged beans, and reduces cooking time.

Soaking also makes beans easier to digest by breaking down the oligosaccharides -- the indigestible sugars that cause flatulence.



During the soaking process beans will rehydrate to at least two to three times their dry size, so it is important to begin with a large pot. A longer soaking time (up to four hours) allows a greater amount of gas-causing properties to dissolve in water, making beans more easily digestible.

After soaking using one of the methods explained, rinse and cook beans in fresh water.

## **Hot Soak Method**

The Hot Soak is the recommended method for soaking beans, as it reduces actual cooking time and produces consistently tender beans.

Step 1 - Place beans in a large pot and add 10 cups of water for every 2 cups of beans.

Step 2 - Heat to boiling and boil for an additional 2 to 3 minutes.

Step 3 - Remove beans from heat, cover and let stand for 4-24 hours.

Step 4 - Drain beans and discard soak water.

Step 5 - Rinse beans with fresh, cool water.

## **Traditional Soak Method**

Step 1 - Pour cold water over the beans to cover.

Step 2 - Soak beans for 8 hours or overnight.

Step 3 - Drain beans and discard soak water (cold water starts the rehydration process slowly so beans will appear wrinkled after soaking).

Step 4 - Rinse beans with fresh, cool water.

## **Quick Soak Method**

Step 1 - Place beans in a large pot and add 6 cups of water for every 2 cups of beans.

Step 2 - Bring to boil and boil for an additional 2 to 3 minutes.

Step 3 - Remove beans from heat, cover and let stand for 1 hour.

Step 4 - Drain beans and discard soak water. Step 5 - Rinse beans with fresh, cool water.

## **Cooking Bean Basics**

- After soaking, simmer beans in fresh water.
- Beans generally take 30 minutes to 2 hours to cook, depending on variety. Check bean packaging (or see Bean Reference Chart) for cooking times.
- During cooking, drop in a tablespoon of oil or butter to prevent foaming and boil-overs.
- Keep cooking water at a gentle simmer to prevent split skins.
- Since beans expand as they cook, add warm water periodically during the cooking process to keep the beans covered.
- Stir beans occasionally throughout the cooking process to prevent sticking.
- Bite test beans for tenderness. Beans should be tender, but not mushy.
- If beans are not tender after the specified cooking time, the reason could be altitude, hard water or the age of the beans. Keep cooking and bite test for tenderness.
- Drain beans immediately after they reach the desired tenderness to halt the cooking process and prevent over-cooking.



## **Bean Basic Bonuses**

- Onions may be added at any time during the cooking process. For a stronger onion flavor, add them during the last half-hour of cooking.
- Herbs and spices like oregano, parsley, thyme and garlic may be added at any time during cooking.
- Add lemon juice, vinegar, tomatoes, chili sauce, catsup, molasses or wine after beans have been soaked and are fully cooked. Wait to add these and other ingredients rich in calcium or acids, which can prevent beans from becoming tender.
- Do not add baking soda to beans at any time. Baking soda robs the beans of the B-vitamin thiamin and may affect the flavor of the cooked beans.

Information provided by:

**NORTHARVEST BEAN GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

<http://www.northarvestbean.org/index.cfm>

50072 East Lake Seven Road  
Frazee, MN 56544

Ph: 218-334-6351 | Fax: 218-334-6360