

Befriend the Bean

--Kori L. Propst, MS

“Beans, beans, the musical fruit; the more you eat, the more you....”

You are all aware of how this little jingle ends, and most likely even more aware of how the little bean ends within your digestive systems! But have you ever wondered what else beans do in our bodies? Beans are a force to be reckoned with in more ways than one.

Nutritionally, beans are an energy powerhouse! Containing approximately 100-120 calories per half-cup serving, beans provide both protein and complex carbohydrates. Remember the food groups on the Food Pyramid? Well, not only does a half-cup of beans count for 1 oz. of lean meat in the “meat and beans” group; they also count for a FULL serving of vegetables! Beans have been shown to reduce risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, as well as help with weight control! The current average American consumption is 3x less than the three cups of beans per week recommended by the USDA. Since Colorado is one of the highest ranking bean growing states in the US, we should eat up for maximum health benefits!

According to a recent study at Michigan State University, beans promote a sense of fullness and aid in reduction of caloric intake due to their low glycemic index and high fiber content. This means that the carbohydrates in beans are released slowly into your bloodstream for sustained energy, satisfying your hunger longer, and reduce the likelihood that you’ll want to continue grazing! The high fiber content of beans is comprised of both soluble and insoluble sources. Soluble fiber helps our bodies during the digestion process to remove cholesterol and handle fats and carbohydrates by forming a gel-like substance within our intestines. Insoluble fiber cannot be digested, so it moves quickly through our digestive tracts, helps to keep us regular, and reduces the risk of some types of cancer. As an added bonus, beans are also very low in fat and are cholesterol free.

Why is the protein in beans important? Protein is broken down to amino acids by our bodies and used to repair our muscles. That grueling weight workout you had with your trainer yesterday? Yes- the protein in beans can help your muscles recover and get stronger from that session!

Beans also contain a host of vitamins and minerals! We continue to hear about the importance of getting calcium from either our diets or supplements. Did you know that a half-cup serving of beans can provide more than is found in some ice creams? And you thought you were justified in eating these creamy desserts! Calcium aids in keeping our bones strong, preventing osteoporosis, and maintaining bone density as we age. One serving of beans provides a significant amount of potassium and folate as well. As most Americans do not consume the recommended amount of potassium on a daily basis, beans are a great way to add it into your daily intake! Trade out your cereal and banana one morning for a breakfast bean burrito! If you combine the beans with a grain, for example the whole wheat tortilla you’ll make the burrito with, their protein quality and digestibility increases.

Eating just two servings of beans provides almost an entire day's suggested amount of folate. This important B vitamin is crucial for women of childbearing age and during pregnancy to aid in cell development of the fetus, for healthy cell division and repair of damaged cells, and heart health. Studies have shown that those with higher folate intakes have a lower risk of heart attack, stroke, and cancer.

Can beans get any better? Absolutely! Eating them is a whole lot more fun than reading about how wonderful they are. And cooking them is certainly not complicated. Go to www.beanhealth.com to find scrumptious and healthy recipes, see the nutritional profiles of the most common beans from the handy table below, and then get cooking!

1 Cup-Cooked Beans	Baby Lima	Black	Blackeye	Cranberry	Garbanzo	Great Northern	Large Lima	Navy	Pink	Pinto	Red Kidney	Small Red
Calories	230	228	200	240	270	209	216	258	252	239	225	226
Carbohydrates	42g	40g	36g	44g	45g	37g	40g	48g	47g	42g	40g	40g
Protein	15g	15g	13g	17g	15g	15g	15g	16g	15g	16g	16g	16g
Dietary Fiber	14g	15g	11g	18g	13g	13g	13g	12g	9g	14g	13g	8g
Folate	274mcg	256mcg	358mcg	366mcg	282mcg	181mcg	156mcg	255mcg	284mcg	294mcg	230mcg	230mcg
Calcium	52mg	46mg	41mg	88mg	80mg	120mg	32mg	127mg	88mg	72mg	50mg	50mg
Iron	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	4mg	5mg	6mg
Fat	1g	1g	1g	1g	4g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g	1g
% Calories From Fat	6%	8%	10%	6%	28%	6%	6%	8%	6%	6%	2%	6%
Sodium	5mg	2mg	6mg	1mg	11mg	4mg	4mg	2mg	3mg	19mg	4mg	4mg

Remember, beans are our friends. Their not-so-friendly side effects may curtail our consumption of them, but then, there IS a way around that pesky problem. Simply discard the soaking and cooking water used during preparation, and enjoy. Try this bean dish!

INGREDIENTS:

- BLACK BEANS ½ CUP
- NAVY BEANS ½ CUP
- KIDNEY BEANS 1 CUP
- SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST 25oz. DICED
- CHICKEN BROTH SAFEWAY LOW SODIUM FAT FREE 14.5 oz.
- RO-TEL MILD TOMATO'S 2 CANS
- ONION DICED 1 ¾ CUP

COOK 6-12 HOURS IN A CROCK POT. ADD MORE WATER FOR A THINNER CONSISTENCY. MAKES 10 SERVINGS

10 SERVINGS- 224 cal. 26g. Protein, 24g. Carbs, 3g. Fat
7 SERVINGS- 319 cal. 37g. Protein, 34g. Carbs, 4g. Fat
5 SERVINGS- 448 cal. 52g. Protein, 48g. Carbs, 5g. Fat

<http://www.americanbean.org/HealthNutrition/Home.htm>
<http://www2.state.id.us/bean/nutrition/value.htm>