Pulses – Beans, Peas, Lentils, Chickpeas – How to Soak, Recipes, and More

Do you avoid beans? Do you find them difficult to cook? Are they too time consuming with all the soaking? Do you buy a few cans to make chili or grab a container of hummus without ever thinking about the huge variety of bean dishes you've never tried?

Pulses are nutritious, tasty, and affordable. There are so many new recipes to choose from and a lot of classic recipes as well. Yes, there's beans and rice, baked beans, split pea soup, bean soup, lentil stew and more. There's also pasta made from pulses and nutritious gluten free flours to use for baking and frying.

Pulses make a great addition to any diet. They are a wonderful source of protein, fiber, and nutrition. And they are delicious!

Pulses include:

- Dried peas – split and whole
- Beans – all varieties
- Lentils – multiple varieties
- Chickpeas – also called garbanzo beans

Pulses and Digestion

Do you avoid beans because they are difficult to digest? Do they give you gas? Well, you're not alone, but this, too, can change.

- You need to start with small servings and work your way up to larger servings to increase your body's natural

enzymes.
- Soak your pulses, including split peas and lentils.
- Consider using added enzymes. *Beano* is a well-known example. *Beanzyme* is a vegan option.
- Many people soak their beans overnight (but don't soak lintels for more than 6 hours or they'll get soggy).

Long Soak Method

Soak beans in a glass or stainless steel bowl or pot. Use filtered water. Cover beans with at least 4 extra inches of water. (They soak up a lot of water). When you're done soaking them, drain and replace the water.

Quick Soak Method

Bring beans to a boil. Remove from heat and allow beans to soak for 1-4 hours. Drain, rinse beans, replace water, and cook.

Peas

Split peas make a quick an easy soup. For every cup split peas, add 2-4 cups or more of water. (Depending on how thick you want it and whether or not you add other vegetables.) Bring to a boil then turn it down to a simmer. Cook for 30-45 minutes – until peas are soft. You can eat it as it is, process it in a food processor or blender, or process half and recombine.

That's the basic recipe. Where you go from there is up to you. Some choose to use chicken stock or vegetable broth instead of water. Many recipes call for finely chopped onions, garlic, celery, and carrots. Some also include potatoes. You can add butter, bacon fat, or a dash of olive oil. Consider adding bay leaves, thyme, mint, pepper, marjoram, rosemary, parsley, or a combination of spices. Add salt when it is cooked.

- Meat eater? Include bacon, ham, or sausage.
- Vegetarian? Top soup bowls with shredded mozzarella and chopped tomatoes.
- Vegan? Add garlic and caramelized onions for a simple soup. Add other veggies for a more complex soup.

Garbanzo Beans

These beans have garnered quite a reputation in the last decade as hummus gained in popularity. The rather expensive store bought dip is easily made at home for a fraction of the price, and it’s fun to play with.

Soak your beans overnight or use the quick soak method. Before cooking, strain the beans and rinse well.

Cover with 2-3 inches of water, bring it to a boil, and reduce to a simmer. Cook for 1-1 ½ hours. You can use a pressure cooker for faster results or a slow cooker if you have the time and patience. Check the water level and add water if needed.

You can also make hummus with raw garbanzo beans. First soak them for 24 hours. Change the water and rinse the beans at least once during that time.

Hummus

- 2 cups of cooked garbanzo beans
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 3 TBL tahini or another nut butter (peanut, cashew, almond)
- 2-2 ½ TBL lemon juice

Add ingredients to a food processor with an S blade or a blender.

You can add whatever you want to add to make variations. Try adding any of the following:

- Cooked or raw red pepper
- Jalapeno or habanero peppers
- Orange and orange zest
- Lemon zest
- Garlic (2-3 cloves or more, cooked or raw)
- Avocado (use lime instead of lemon and add a pinch of cumin)
- Spinach or zucchini
- Artichokes
- Sundried tomatoes or oven roasted tomatoes
- Pumpkin (1 cup pumpkin puree plus a little cinnamon and cayenne)

Lentils

Like beans, there a million recipes for lentils. You can make soups, casseroles, curries, fillings, spreads, salads, baked goods, and more. Our current favorite is a weekly creation using whatever leftover greens we have in the fridge.

Kristina’s Lentil Stew Recipe

- 8 cups green lentils (you don’t have to, but I prefer to soak them)
- 2 medium onions
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 3 cups roughly chopped greens (can be spinach, kale, collards, chard…whatever you like)
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, cubed
- 1 zucchini, quartered
- 1 dash garam masala
- 1/2 tsp curry powder
- 1/4 tsp cumin seed
- 1/2 tsp dried ginger
- 1 dash smoked paprika
- 1 dash chili flakes (more if you like spice!)
- 1/4 tsp dried coriander

- 6-10 whole cloves
- 5-10 bay leaves
- 1 can coconut milk
- 2 tbsps coconut oil
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp apple cider vinegar
- 4-6 cups vegetable broth
- Cilantro and lime wedge to garnish

Let the oil heat in the pressure cooker (if you don't have a pressure cooker, use a large stew or stock pot) on low heat. Put the garam masala, curry powder, cumin seed, dried ginger, smoked paprika, chili flakes, and coriander in the oil to toast them, stirring occasionally.

Add the onions and garlic after about 30 seconds. Let them simmer 2-5 minutes or until they soften.

Pour in the apple cider vinegar, coconut milk, and tomato paste. Stir. Let those combine for a minute. Turn up the heat to a medium and add in the greens, sweet potatoes, and zucchini. You can use these specific vegetables or what you have on hand or those you prefer, like carrots, other squash or something else (I do not recommend broccoli). Give the greens and other vegetables about 5 minutes to simmer and soften. If at any time in the cooking process you need more liquid, add some of the stock.

Add the lentils in on top of your mixture. Fill the pot to the top of the lentils with broth. Put the bay leaves and the cloves in a spice ball or tea strainer and add them on top.

Seal the pressure cooker, turn the heat on high, and leave the lentils to cook for roughly 12 minutes (times may vary based on your individual pressure cooker).

If you aren't using a pressure cooker, bring the whole pot to a boil then reduce to a slow simmer and let it cook for 20-30 minutes until the lentils reach the consistency you want.

Serve in bowls topped with cilantro and a squeeze of lime.

The recipe itself is vegan, but you can add meat if you like or substitute chicken broth. Sausage works well with this recipe. You can also top it with some feta cheese or yogurt. Play around with your veggies and spices to see what you like best.

The end result will be a hearty, healthy, warming stew with minimal fuss and lots of flavor.

Conclusion

If you are ready to cook with pulses, you can easily find thousands of great recipes on the Internet. Don’t be afraid to make them from scratch. A little planning is all it takes to save money, make the best, and avoid adding cans to the landfill. Just remember – soak well, rinse well, and start off with small servings.

Related Reading:

- *Homemade, Vegan Nut Milk Recipes and More*
- *Raw Hummus Recipe*
- *10 Vegan-Friendly Sources Of Protein*
- *Things Health Nuts Do With Their Food*

Recommended Products:

- Digestive Enzymes

Sources:

- *Eating Pulses is Easy* – Pulses
- *10 tips for better bean digestion; a few announcements* – The Full Helping