

LEGUMES

New Requirements

School Food Authorities shall offer legumes (dry beans and peas) one time per week.

Foundations

Legumes (dry beans and peas) are an inexpensive food that can make school meals more nutritious. Legumes are an excellent source of plant protein and dietary fiber, and provide nutrients such as iron, potassium, folate, and zinc. They are also naturally low in fat and sodium. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating three cups of beans per week.

What is a Legume?

Legumes are plants that have pods with rows of seeds inside. Legumes include dry beans, peas, and lentils. Legumes are nutritious and flavorful. They are very versatile and can be incorporated into a variety of dishes. Legumes come in fresh, frozen, canned and dry forms.

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Examples of Legumes

| | |
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| pinto beans | black-eyed peas |
| kidney beans | garbanzo beans |
| black beans | (chickpeas) |
| lentils | great northern |
| split peas | beans |
| navy beans | |

Only a few types, such as green beans, string beans, yellow beans, wax beans, green peas, baby green lima beans and fresh soybeans (edamame) are not considered dry beans.



Using USDA Foods

The USDA Foods Program offers canned, low-sodium, pre-cooked dry beans and peas.



Menu Tips

- Add legumes to all kinds of dishes to increase the amount of fiber in meals.
- Beans can be served as a side dish, a potato topping, or in pasta sauce.
- Make canned dry beans and peas an everyday choice on your salad bar.
- Add canned dry beans to your chef salad.
- Serve baked beans with sandwiches and hamburgers.
- Complete your Mexican-themed menus by offering pinto beans, black beans or fat-free refried beans.

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Recipe Ideas

- Add beans and other vegetables to soups. A variety of beans are good in soups including garbanzo, kidney, black, and pinto.
- Add pinto or black beans to tacos and burritos.
- Top salads with beans or make a bean salad using three, four or five different beans.
- Use legumes as a meat substitute to reduce food costs and provide a vegetarian meal. Here are some examples: add kidney beans to chili, lentils in meatloaf, pinto beans in enchiladas, black beans in chunky soup, mashed kidney or pinto beans in meatballs, soybeans in casseroles and white beans in stews.
- Add canned dry beans and peas to casseroles, stews, soups and side dishes like rice pilaf.