

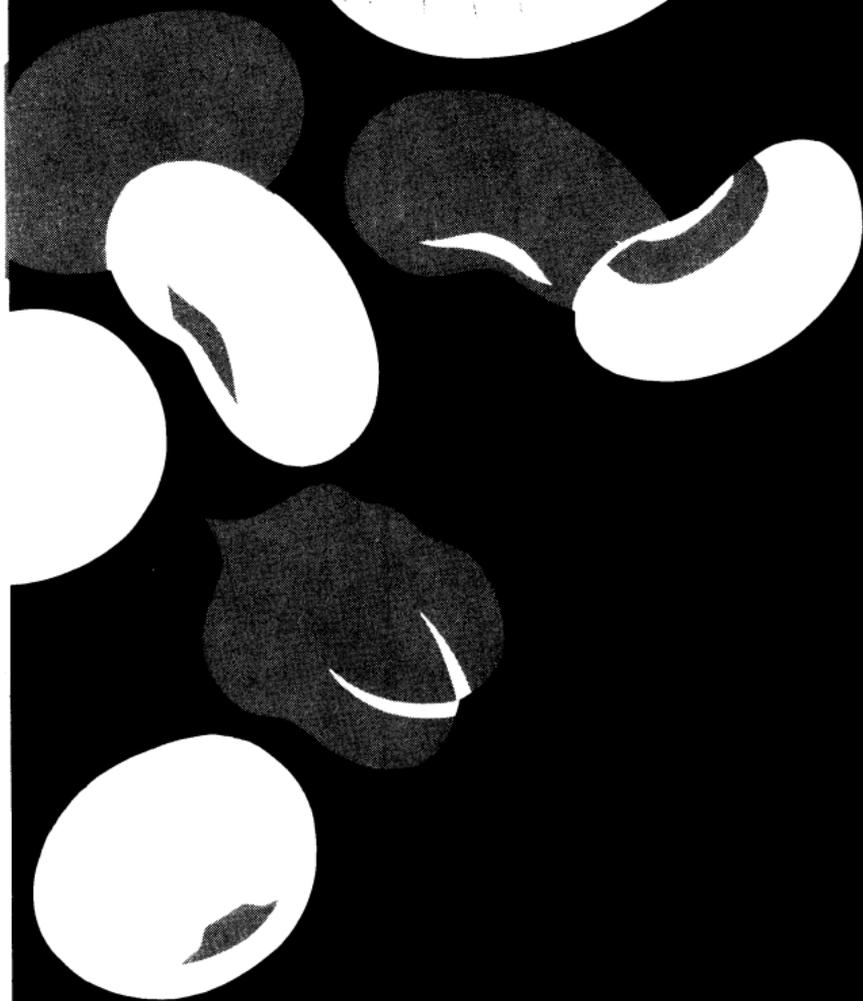
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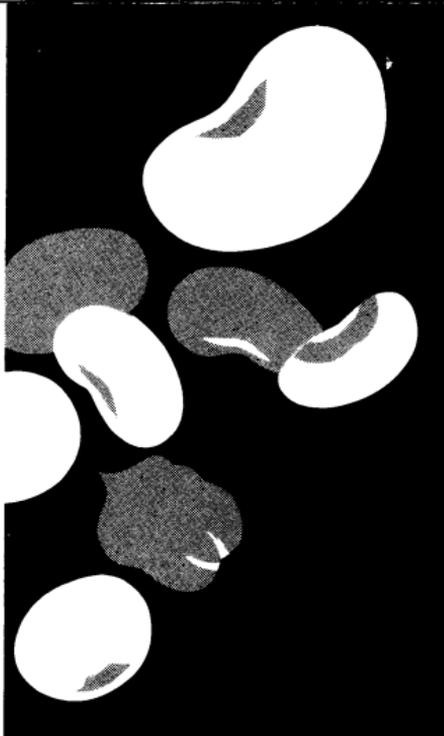
How to Buy DRY BEANS, PEAS, and LENTILS

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How to Buy DRY BEANS, PEAS, and LENTILS



Dry beans, peas, and lentils—delicious, nutritious, low-cost foods that can be served in so many ways. But how much do you **really** know about these foods? For example, what is a lentil? What is the difference between black-eye peas and black-eye beans? What quality factors should you bear in mind when buying beans, peas, and lentils? How do you store and prepare them? Which need soaking and which do not before cooking? What are the varieties of beans and peas available? These are some of the factors a smart shopper should consider when buying these products.

Dry beans, and their close cousins, dry peas and lentils, are food bargains. They are an excellent source of protein—in fact, dry beans provide more protein for your money than most other foods. And the protein derived from these foods, when combined with protein from meats and other foods of animal origin, makes an unbeatable “protein team” which the body needs to build and repair vital organs and tissues.

Dry beans, peas, and lentils provide a wealth of energy and nutrition at a cost per pound that is nominal. They contain B vitamins, such as thiamin, and riboflavin, and some are a good source of calcium. They are real nuggets of mineral value for the iron they provide—a $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving of dried beans or dry peas, for example, provides about a third of the iron recommended daily for an adult male.

The dry bean sometimes is considered a building food, an energy food, and to some extent a protective food. Peas and lentils also fall into these same categories, and since their fat content is low they are useful in some special diets.

A cup of cooked dried red beans provides about 230 calories and the following percentages of the minimum daily recommended allowances for adults:

Nutrient	Women (22–35 yrs.)	Men (22–35 yrs.)
Protein	27%	23%
Iron	26%	46%
Thiamin	13%	9%
Riboflavin	7%	6%

A cup of dry split peas (cooked) provides about 290 calories and the following percentages of the minimum daily recommended allowances for adults:

Nutrient	Women (22–35 yrs.)	Men (22–35 yrs.)
Protein	36%	31%
Iron	23%	42%
Thiamin	37%	26%
Riboflavin	15%	13%

BUYING TIPS

Although there are many varieties of dry beans, peas, and lentils available in the stores, the following buying tips apply for all of them:

- **Federal-State Grades**—Nearly all peas and lentils and about one-third of all beans are officially inspected before or after processing. However, retail packages of beans, peas, or lentils seldom carry the Federal or State grade.

Developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Consumer and Marketing Service, Federal grades for beans, peas, and lentils are generally based on the following factors: shape, size, color,

damage, and foreign material. The more uniform the color and size of the product, the higher the Federal grade will be. Beans, peas, and lentils in the lower grades usually contain more foreign matter and more kernels of uneven size and off-color. Lower qualities are not usually sold through retail stores.

The Federal grades for beans, peas, and lentils you may see on the grocery shelf are normally the highest grades. Some of these higher grades are:

U.S. No. 1—for dry whole or split peas, lentils, and black-eye peas (beans).

U.S. No. 1 Choice Handpicked, or Handpicked—for Great Northern, pinto, and pea beans.

U.S. Extra No. 1 for lima beans, large or small.

Instead of the Federal grade on beans, you might find a State grade which is based on quality factors similar to those for Federal grades.

● **Quality factors**—If you do not find packages of beans, peas, or lentils marked with Federal or State grades, you can be your own “grader” in a way by looking for the same factors a Federal grader considers.

First, try to buy your beans, peas, or lentils in cellophane bags or other “see through” types of packages, such as cardboard boxes with a cellophane “window.” Then, consider these factors:

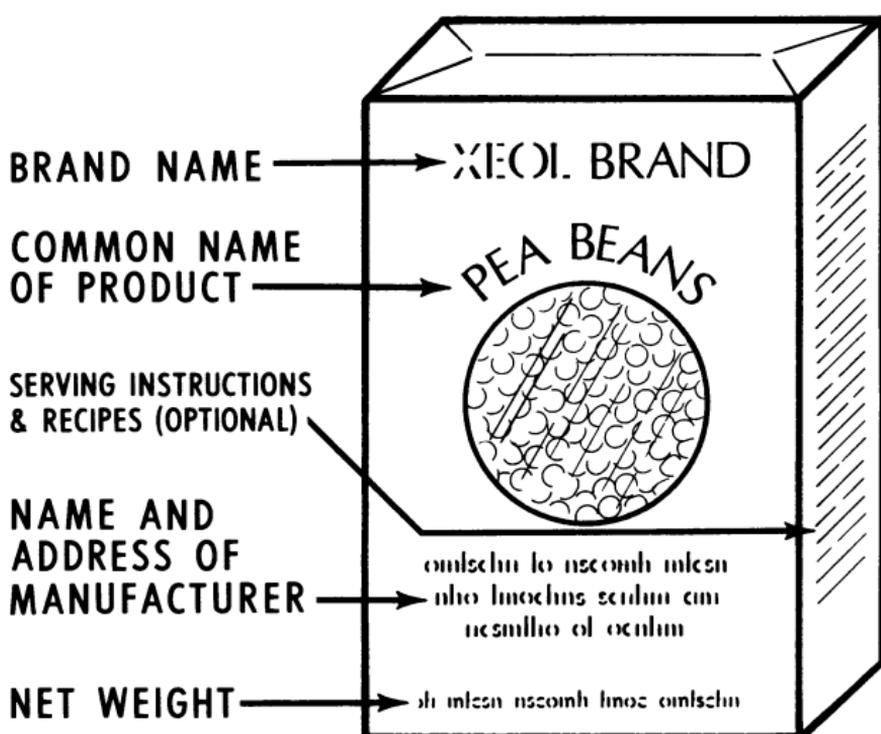
Brightness of color—Beans, peas, and lentils should have a bright uniform color. Loss of color usually indicates long storage, lack of freshness, and a product that will take longer to cook. Eating quality, however, is not affected.

Uniformity of size—Look for beans, peas, or lentils of uniform size. Mixed sizes will result in uneven cooking, since smaller beans cook faster than larger ones.

Visible defects—Cracked seed coats, foreign material, and pinholes caused by insect damage are signs of a low quality product.

● **Read the label**—In addition to the Federal or State grade, the package label can provide other important buying information. By law, the label must contain at least the following basic information: the name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor, the common or usual name of the product (pea beans, Great Northern beans, etc.), and the weight (given in pounds and ounces).

Other information on the label might include a picture of a suggested way to serve beans, peas, or lentils, and instructions on how to prepare and serve them, including recipes.



In summary, look for beans, peas, and lentils in cellophane or other clear packages which carry a Federal or State grade. If you can't find graded packages, look for a product with a bright color, beans of uniform size, and no visible damage. Read the label carefully—it may give you important instructions for preparing the product.

STORAGE TIPS

Dry beans, peas, and lentils should be kept in tightly covered containers and stored in a dry, cool place (50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit). Stored in this manner, they will keep their quality for several months.

After opening a package, don't mix the contents with that of other packages bought at separate times, particularly several months apart. Mixing packages will result in uneven cooking since older beans take longer to cook than fresher ones. Keep the product in the original package until opened. Then store it in a glass or metal jar or a container with a tight-fitting lid.

**U.S.
Extra
No. 1**



Large Lima Beans

**U.S.
No. 1**



Green Split Peas

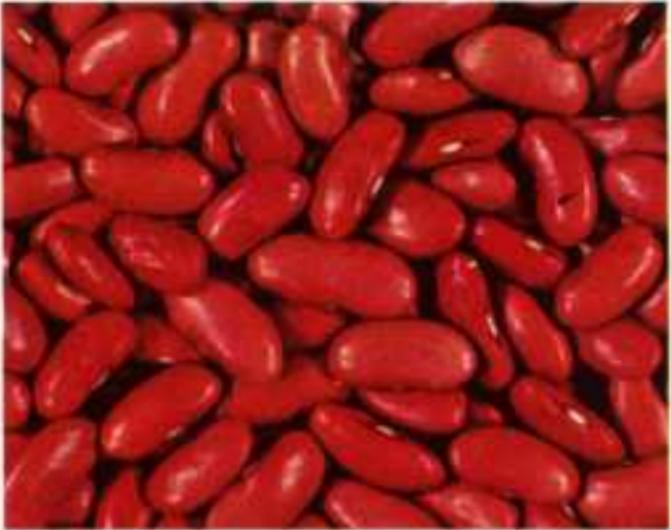
**U.S.
No. 1**



Lentils

The above samples are representative of

**U.S.
No. 1**



Light Red Kidney Beans

**U.S.
No. 1**



Pinto Beans

**U.S.
No. 1**



Black-eye Beans (Peas)

superior grade beans, peas, and lentils.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Wash beans, peas, and lentils first.

● Dry beans and **whole** peas should be soaked before cooking to reduce the time required for cooking. **Split** peas used in soup and lentils may be boiled **without soaking**. Split peas used for other purposes hold their shape better if soaked for a short time.

● A quick and effective way to soak beans and whole peas is to start by boiling them in water for two minutes. Remove from heat, soak one hour, and they are ready to cook. Soak split peas only $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before cooking them.

● If beans or peas are to be soaked overnight, it is still advantageous to start with the two minute boil because this will mean fewer hard skins. If the beans or peas are to be soaked overnight in a warm room, the brief boil will keep them from souring.

● A teaspoon of salt for each cup of dry beans, peas, or lentils will suit the average taste. For special flavor, add onions, herbs, or meat. Add salt and flavoring only after soaking since salt toughens the surface of the beans and increases cooking time.

● Boil gently and stir very little in order to prevent breaking of skins.

● If preferred, some dry beans and peas—including Great Northern, kidney, large lima, black, cranberry, pea (navy), and pinto beans and whole peas—can be pressure cooked in from 3–10 minutes, depending on variety. Fill pressure cooker no more than one-third full of food and water to allow for expansion. Beans and peas which normally cook in short periods of time should not be pressure-cooked. These include black-eye peas (beans), lentils, and split peas.

● Always remember to allow for expansion of beans, peas, and lentils when cooking. For example, depending on the kind, one cup of the dried beans yields 2 to $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups of cooked beans.

The following specific information about beans, peas, and lentils should help you decide which product to buy.

BEANS

Beans are among the oldest of foods and today are considered an important staple for millions of people.

They once were considered to be worth their weight in gold—the jeweler’s “carat” owes its origin to a pea-like bean on the east coast of Africa.

Beans also once figured very prominently in politics. During the age of the Romans, balloting was done with beans. White beans represented a vote of approval and the dark beans meant a negative vote. Today, beans still play an active role in politics—bean soup is a daily “must” in both the Senate and the House dining rooms in the Nation’s Capitol.

Beans undergo rather extensive processing before reaching the consumer. They are delivered to huge processing plants where they are cleaned to remove pods, stems, and other debris. Special machines separate debris by weight (gravity), and then screen the beans by size. Discolored beans are removed by machines equipped with photo-sensitive electric eyes.

Many varieties of beans may be found on the grocery shelf. Although you will not find all of them, here are some of the more popular varieties, and their uses:

- **Black beans** (or black turtle soup beans)—They are used in thick soups and in Oriental and Mediterranean dishes.

- **Black-eye peas** (also called black-eye beans or “cow peas”)—These beans are small, oval-shaped, and creamish white with a black spot on one side. They are used primarily as a main dish vegetable. Black-eye peas **are** beans. There is no difference in the product, but different names are used in some regions of the country.

- **Garbanzo beans**—Known as “chick-peas,” these beans are nut-flavored and commonly pickled in vinegar and oil for salads. They can also be used as a main dish vegetable, in the “unpickled” form. Similar beans are cranberry and yellow-eye beans.

- **Great Northern beans**—Larger than but similar to pea beans, these beans are used in soups, salads, casserole dishes, and home baked beans.

● **Kidney beans**—These beans are large and have a red color and kidney shape. They are popular for chili con carne and add zest to salads and many Mexican dishes.

● **Lima beans**—Not widely known as dry beans, lima beans make an excellent main dish vegetable and can be used in casseroles. They are broad and flat. Lima beans come in different sizes, but the size does not affect the quality.

● **Navy beans**—This is a broad term which includes Great Northern, pea, flat small white, and small white beans.

● **Pea beans**—Small, oval, and white, pea beans are a favorite for home baked beans, soups, and casseroles. They hold their shape even when cooked tender.

● **Pinto beans**—These beans are of the same species as the kidney and red beans. Beige-colored and speckled, they are used mainly in salads and chili.

● **Red and pink beans**—Pink beans have a more delicate flavor than red beans. Both are used in many Mexican dishes and chili. They are related to the kidney bean.

PEAS

Dry peas are an interesting and versatile food group that add variety to meals. Dry peas may be green or yellow and may be bought either split or whole.

● **Green dry peas**—This type of dry pea has a more distinct flavor than yellow dry peas. Green dry peas enjoy their greatest popularity in the United States, England, and North European countries and are gaining in popularity in Japan.

● **Yellow dry peas**—This type of dry pea has a less pronounced flavor than other types of peas but is in popular demand in the Southern and Eastern parts of the country. They are also preferred in Eastern Canada, the Caribbean, and South America.

● **Dry split peas**—These peas have had their skins removed and they are mainly used for split pea soup. Dry split peas also combine well with many different foods. How do split peas get split?

Specially grown whole peas are dried and their skins are removed by a special machine. A second machine then breaks the peas in half.

● **Dry whole peas**—These peas are used in making soups, casseroles, puddings, vegetable side dishes, dips, and hors d'oeuvres.

Green and yellow whole peas and green and yellow split peas, although they vary in taste a little, are used interchangeably in many recipes and in making soups. Individual preference is the deciding factor here. Remember, though, there is a difference in soaking procedure for whole and split peas.

Dry peas are served in many ways—"just plain boiled" and served with butter, for example, they serve as a welcome dish with meats, fish, poultry, and game. They can also be served as a puree and they can be made into dips, patties, croquettes, stuffed peppers, and even souffles.

LENTILS

The lentil is an old world legume, that is disc-shaped, about the size of a pea. Thousands of years old, lentils were perhaps the first of the convenience foods. With no coddling at all, they cook to puffed tenderness in a mere half hour. With such a short cooking time, the use of a pressure cooker is not advised. If the cooked lentils are to be drained, as in making salad, save the cooking liquid (which is loaded with nutrients) for a cup of luncheon soup or to use in gravies and stews.

Lentils are an excellent partner with many foods—fruits, vegetables, and meat. To cook, place 2 cups of lentils in a heavy saucepan, and add 5 cups of cold or warm water and 2 teaspoons salt. Bring to boiling point, reduce heat, cover tightly, and boil gently for 30 minutes.

To Help You Choose and Use DRY BEANS, PEAS, and LENTILS

INTERCHANGEABLE FOODS

- Dry beans, peas, and lentils are interchangeable and may be used for making soups, salads, and served as main dish vegetables.

SHOP CAREFULLY

- Buy in cellophane bags or other clear, see-through packages. Look for beans, peas, and lentils with bright, uniform color, uniform size, and no visible damage.

BUY QUALITY

- Some packages may carry a U.S. or State grade—your assurance of high quality.

COOK WITH CARE

- Dry beans, whole peas, and split peas (unless used in soup) need soaking before cooking. Lentils do not. Cook slowly and boil gently.

