



PULSES FOR HEALTH

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Pulses – What Are They?

Depending on where you're from, you may have never heard the term "pulses". Basically, pulses include any dried edible seed or bean from a plant, including beans, peas, and legumes. The most common pulses are dried peas, edible beans, lentils, and chickpeas, but there are many more.

- **Pinto Beans** – Pinto beans are an excellent bean that you can make many types of dishes from. One favorite is baked beans. Here's how to make your own baked beans from scratch.
- **Lentils** – All red, green, yellow, and brown lentils are also pulses. They are dried edible seeds. You can make amazing curries and even meat-like lentil loaves from these pulses.
- **Chickpeas** – You may know these as garbanzo beans. You can make beautiful dishes with these, like hummus and stews. You can make your own hummus that is way better than store bought.
- **Garden Peas** – These are also called snow peas or snap peas. They are in a pod, and you remove the seed or pea to eat it. You can eat them inside the pod, in a stir-fry, or you can eat them outside the pod cooked in a variety of ways.
- **Black Eyed Peas** – These are dried peas that have the characteristic black dot on an off-white background. They are made for good luck in the southern US states every New Year's Day.
- **Runner Beans** – These look like green beans in the garden, but inside the green pod are seeds or beans of a variety of colors, from pink to lavender or even spots and speckles of color. To cook, just take off the strings and chop before boiling, or you can also dry them and then cook the dried beans outside the pod.
- **Fava Beans** – These are also called broad beans. You can use them fresh or dried just like runner beans. They are very forgiving and can be used in stews, sauces, fillings, and snacks. You can eat the pods if they're fresh from the garden, but most people eat the dried bean from the pod.
- **Kidney Beans** – These are red or light red in color and have a great flavor. They're most often used in soups, stews, chilis, and make a great base for a bean burger.
- **Butter Beans** – Also called lima beans, these are often eaten just steamed with butter as a side dish, but you can use them in many recipes too. These creamy butter beans will delight your entire family.

- **Great Northern / Cannellini Beans** – These are a light-colored bean that is usually used in white chilis, soups, stews, and as a side dish. A great white chili dish with northern beans can't be beaten.

The remarkable fact about pulses is that they are very high in flavor and nutrition. You can count a serving of pulses as either a veggie or meat, or both if you eat enough servings. Learning to cook with pulses will ensure your entire family's good health and cut down on your grocery bill too.

How to Store Pulses

If you want to cook more with pulses, arguably the healthiest and most inexpensive food in the world, you'll be happy to note they're also easy to store.

You can be ready for almost anything when you have pulses on hand for cooking and for snacks too. Imagine taking your famous chili out of the freezer when last-minute guests show up, popping some cornbread in the oven, and then before you know it, you have a hearty meal.

Canned Pulses

If you buy canned pulses, you need to store them in a cool, dry, dark place to ensure that they remain fresh. Try to buy the cans that don't have the plastic liner. When you purchase canned goods, always check the use by dates to get the most extended life possible from them.

Most canned pulses will last for years when stored properly, whether store bought or homemade. Make sure your pantry doesn't get too hot or too cold. It should be a nice cool place that doesn't freeze, but not a place that gets hot in the summer.

Dry Pulses

Transfer your dry pulses to an airtight container that you can close. For example, glass canning jars work great to store dried beans, peas, and lentils without any issues. Don't wash them before you put them away, or you'll end up with mold. Use up the old ones before putting more in the jar.

You can store dried pulses for up to a year. They're not bad after a year either; it's just that you may have to cook them longer to make them get soft. If you ever buy dried pulses and they won't cook, it's due to how old they are.

Cooked

Once you've cooked your pulses, you can store them in the freezer to take out when you want a fast meal. Just store in an airtight container, then thaw in the fridge overnight. You can also dump a frozen block of pulses right out in a pot and slowly heat them up to eat or use in recipes.

You can keep cooked pulses that have nothing else with them for about six months in the freezer. If it's a soup, curry, or other types of recipe, three months is the limit. Just make sure they're in airtight and sealed containers, and they'll last longer.

Salads with pulses can be stored up to three days in the refrigerator if they're kept in a sealed, airtight container. Home-cooked or canned or prepared soups, salads, and curries made with pulses can be stored in the fridge up to five days if you cover them with the cooking liquid or water.

As you can see, storing and cooking with pulses is not tricky. They're so forgiving that you'll be happy to cook with them. They are literally the most affordable and nutritious and most self-stable item you can buy for your home cooking needs.

What Pulses are Healthiest?

If you are concerned with being healthy, look no further than cooking with pulses to make all the difference in your menus. They are high in protein, low glycemic, and fat free. Each has a distinct flavor profile that can be adapted to any type of cuisine around the world.

1. **Garbanzo Beans** – Did you know that garbanzo beans are also called chickpeas? Well, you do now. They're full of vitamin C, potassium, folate, and since they're high in fiber and cholesterol-free, you can't do much better than including these beans in your meals and snacks. They help prevent constipation and contribute to healthy bones and teeth. [Hummus anyone?](#)
2. **Kidney Beans** – Need energy? Add kidney beans to your dishes and salads. Low fat, low glycemic, and rich in complex carbs, kidney beans are an excellent addition to any meal where you need a strong and hearty bean for flavor and texture like chili, bean burgers, dips, and more. [Try this kidney bean salad.](#)
3. **Black Beans** – If you've never had a black bean taco, you're missing out. And if you think you'll miss the meat, you're wrong. [Black beans make excellent tacos](#) because they have 15 grams of protein and 15 grams of fiber per serving. Full of iron, phosphorous, calcium, magnesium, manganese, copper, zinc and low in sodium, what more can you

want? Oh yes, they also have potassium, so it makes a great post-workout snack or meal.

4. **Lentils** – The cool thing about lentils is they cook faster and have a wide variety of flavors. Whether red, yellow, or brown, they yield 9 grams of protein per serving. Don't forget that they also have 8 grams of fiber, which means that they improve your digestion just by eating them. Due to their high folate concentration, they're super-suitable for women, especially pregnant women. Try this sweet potato and lentil soup for pregnancy recipe. **Hint:** It's good even if you're not pregnant.
5. **Mung Beans** – Made popular by Chinese chefs, mung beans are high in protein, fiber, phytonutrients, and antioxidants. The neat thing about this type of pulse is that they include a kind of carb called oligosaccharides that help prevent bloating due to gas. Some people swear by a good mung bean soup for hangovers.
6. **Fava Beans** – These super-high fiber beans are thought to help reduce the chances of contracting colon cancer because of the effect that they have on digestion. You can even create a fantastic snack with fava beans by drizzling them with olive oil, sprinkling with spices, and baking them in the oven. Better than popped corn. Try these Parmesan Baked Fava Bean Chips.
7. **Red Beans** – A favorite in Asia, these beans are full of magnesium, potassium, iron, zinc, manganese, B vitamins, and more. Because they're also low in sodium, they're good for helping to lower your cholesterol. You can use these beans in stir-fries, casseroles, and more. They make amazing "meat" patties, so they're a good choice when you want to create a meaty bean burger.
8. **Black Eyed Peas** – This high protein, low glycemic beauty is traditionally made for good luck in the southern US states every New Year's Day. There is a good reason for that, since these pulses are rich in vitamins A and C as well as full of antioxidants that can help you ward off free radicals and maybe even save you from cancer. Try these New Year's Day Black Eyed Peas.

Which one do you think you're going to try first? When it comes to adding protein-rich, fat-free, low-sugar food on your plate, you can't do any better than adding pulses to your diet every single day. They're good for you, count as a veggie and fruit serving, and are a complete meal just as they are.

Cooking with Pulses – Recipes

When you're looking for something healthy, packed with nutrition, and super-flavorful, look no further than pulses. Pulses are just edible seeds and beans such as peas, chickpeas, lentils, and other legumes. These recipes offer a lot of flavors from around the world and aren't hard to make either.

1. Chickpea Stew by Garden in the Kitchen (<https://gardeninthekitchen.com/instant-pot-chickpea-stew/>)

If you like your Instant Pot, you're going to love this chickpea stew. It's simple to make because there aren't a lot of ingredients, and hey, it's the Instant Pot! This chickpea stew is still full of flavor and, most importantly, nutrition. If you want to make this into a soup, just add more of your favorite broth. Serve this stew over rice to make it super-hearty.

2. Spiced Red Lentil Dhal by Kylee Cooks (<https://www.kyleecooks.com/spiced-red-lentil-dhal/>)

This vibrantly colored red lentil recipe makes a fabulous make-ahead meal. It's also low in calories so you can eat that second bowl that you know you really want. If you make this dish with veggie stock it becomes another vegan meal, but it works just as well with chicken stock. For the best quality premade stock, for the price, use Sam's Choice.

3. Black Bean and Sausage Soup (<https://www.garlicandzest.com/black-bean-and-sausage-soup/>)

You're going to start with dried beans in this recipe. Pay close attention to the method because they're right about not adding salt to the beans while you're simmering. Salt will absolutely make most of your beans tough. Salt is for flavor, which you will add eventually, but don't add it at the start.

This is a hearty soup that uses chili paste for flavoring. You're going to really love it. Make some cornbread to go with this one, and your family will thank you.

4. Caramelized Leek and Fava Bean Toast by Bonappetit.com
(<https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/caramelized-leek-and-fava-bean-toast>)

Want to eat a non-stew or soup dish with your favorite pulses? Try this amazing dish. It brings a new level to your ordinary toast dish. Fava beans, fresh peas, and the caramelized leeks make this a unique dish even though it's only toast. Take the time to find or make flavorful sourdough bread to take this dish to the next level. This meal is suitable for company or just to enjoy alone to treat yourself extra special.

5. Kidney and Black Bean Burgers by Vegan in the Freezer
(<https://veganinthefreezer.com/kidney-and-black-bean-burgers/>)

Sometimes you just want a burger. Okay, well, maybe this burger isn't what you thought you wanted, but you're sure to enjoy it and even love it. It's so flavorful and, this recipe in particular makes a large batch. This is good because it allows you to make a big batch to freeze so that you can have an easy and fast and healthy meal any time of day.

6. Korean Mung Bean Pancakes by Lands and Flavors

(<http://www.landsandflavors.com/korean-mung-bean-pancakes/>)

If you want to enjoy your pulses in a very delicious way, these savory pancakes are for you. This recipe is also gluten free which is great for those who are concerned with that. They are delicious and flavorful due to the brown rice flour and of course, frying. It's okay to eat fried food when it's this wonderful and healthy.

Cooking Pulses Properly

Cooking with pulses is a lot easier than you may think. They are very safe to eat and cook with. You can use them canned, frozen, and dried in your cooking without any issues. Having said that, there are some basic cooking instructions that work for most types of pulses that you may want to follow.

- **Drain Canned Pulses** – Most of the time (regardless of the brand), when you use precooked canned pulses of any type, from chickpeas to kidney beans, you'll want to drain and rinse them. The main reason is that they put a lot of sodium in these packages. Plus, unless your recipe says use the liquid, it will change the flavor and texture of your recipe if you use the juice.
- **Soaking Pulses** – Most pulses should be soaked for 12 hours due to the phytic acid and other issues that make them harder to digest. If you get a lot of gas when you eat pulses, this is the reason. Even though you don't need to soak lentils before cooking them, if you do get gas consider soaking anyway. Soaking makes cooking faster too. Don't salt the water when soaking.
- **Pre-Soaking and Rinsing** – When cooking with dried pulses other than lentils, you probably always want to soak them. You always want to wash and rinse them, though, because there may be stones mixed in that weren't noticed while packaging them. Plus, they do not wash your beans before they package them because it will cause mold growth. Always toss the soak water or rinse water. This makes the beans much more digestible too.

- **Add Baking Soda** – If you want your pulses to be able to turn into a puree, it's vital to know how to make them soft enough. Adding about 2 teaspoons of baking soda to the water per pound of pulses that you're soaking will help them get softer. You're going to drain and rinse the baking soda out, so don't add that to your recipes.
- **Cooking** – The way you cook pulses is that you typically boil them in a lot of water over low heat with a lid to keep evaporation to a minimum. You don't want the temperature too high because you're going to cook them for a long time, and you don't want them sticking or scorching.
- **Adding Meat** – If you are going to add meat to your beans, it's best to do it after they've been soaked and drained. Add the meat during the actual cooking process or even after the pulses are cooked. Adding meat at the beginning can cut down on foaming due to the addition of fat. If you're going to puree the pulses, though, you should cook the meat separately because the addition of salt can toughen up the beans.
- **Seasoning** – Pulses are best seasoned after they're done or nearly done with the cooking process to avoid making your beans tough or over-soft. You can safely follow the directions for well-tested recipes, though, which do usually include seasonings from the start. Just know that if you want beans in a salad, for example, you'll do best to be strict about adding salt and spices too soon.

By following these basics for cooking pulses safely, you're going to find that you really enjoy adding them to your meals or making an entire meal out of them more often. The fact that dried pulses are so inexpensive makes them an excellent high-protein staple in your diet.

Most Common Pulses and Eating Them

Pulses are a fabulous low-fat, high-fiber, cholesterol-free, and sodium-free source of protein, amino acids, and antioxidants. And, of course, lots of nutrients that you need like iron, potassium, and folate that you may also think of as legumes.

The remarkable thing about pulses is that not only do they have a lot of protein, but they can also be counted both as your fruit and veggie portion and as meat.

Dry Beans

When it comes to pulses, you're likely very familiar with dried beans like kidney beans, Northern beans, pinto beans, and so forth. These are some of the easiest to cook with and enjoy.

Most dried beans need to be soaked overnight before being prepared, but once you've cooked them, you can use them in a variety of ways. You can eat them as they are with cornbread or biscuits or as an addition to other recipes such as salads, soups, stews, and even smashed up into burgers.

One really yummy recipe that uses beans liberally is this Easy Bean Salad from A Couple Cooks. (<https://www.acouplecooks.com/seriously-simple-three-bean-salad/>)

Dry Peas

Whether you're eating chickpeas, black eyed peas, or garden peas, you can enjoy them fast. They don't take as long to cook as other types of pulses. You can soak them for about six hours before cooking and get a good result.

The flavors of peas are so different that you'll want to enjoy them in a variety of ways. You can make soups, stews, curries, and even enjoy them as a side dish on their own when adequately prepared.

While this is not the only dish, one of the most popular pea meals you can make is pea soup. Try this Best Ever Split Pea Soup from Allrecipes.com. (<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/23860/best-ever-split-pea/>)

Lentils

Lentils cook the fastest of all the pulses. You technically can get away with cooking without soaking. However, do wash and rinse to ensure that they're clean since they don't clean pulses before packaging them.

You can enjoy lentils as soups, stews, curries, and as an ingredient in other dishes –including salads. Honestly, there is so much flexibility when it comes to all the pulses that once you start cooking with them, you'll enjoy the variety that you can use and the different flavors you can develop.

While you can undoubtedly use lentils for a lot more than soup, you must make this Winter Detox Moroccan Sweet Potato Lentil Soup in your slow cooker. (<https://littlespicejar.com/moroccan-sweet-potato-lentil-soup/>) You'll be glad you did.

Studies show that including pulses into your daily diet can reduce diet-related and obesity-related health risks. They're super-easy to cook, delicious to eat, and as bonus pulses are budget friendly.

Using Pulses as an Egg Substitute

One thing that pulses offer that makes them even more exciting is the ability to create an egg substitute that genuinely gives you options that you may not have thought you had when you went eggless. And even if you're not eggless, you may want to try to use pulses in your recipes to replace eggs just because it tastes great.

Legume Proteins

Ingredients like soy protein isolate can work as an egg replacement in terms of helping bind and thicken ingredients. However, they're more expensive options than eggs or some of the other egg substitute options. Having said that, they work best, which is why they're used in manufacturing even if vegan isn't the intended outcome. And while they're mostly used in manufacturing, they're starting to appear in specialty stores too.

Aquafaba

This is a popular egg replacer that vegans like to use. It's essentially the thick water that's in the can with the beans. The liquid that is in the canned chickpeas is great for making meringue, mayonnaise, macarons, and other baked goods.

You can use the aquafaba that is in the canned beans, but you can make your own too. The one most people use in canned chickpeas, but technically you can use any the liquid from any type of legume. The reason people like the liquid from chickpeas is the color.

Use as an ingredient, but don't try to eat it just as it is. Always choose unsalted beans for best results. If you do use the salted kind, just use less salt than your recipe calls for to adjust for flavor. It will not affect the outcome in any meaningful way. You can use it whipped or not whipped and – surprise – you don't need to chill it to whip it. Just whip it with your high-speed stand mixer until it whips up. Be patient. It will take 10 minutes or more.

You can save the aquafaba from the can by pouring into an ice cube tray, freezing, then popping them out into another container. Just grab it and thaw it before you use it. It takes 2 to 3 tablespoons to replace an egg.

Pulse Flours

You can also use pulse flours in baking instead of egg whites or aquafaba. If you choose to use pulse flours in your baking to replace eggs, try using whole navy bean flour mixed with water. It's the best vegan egg replacer out there for baking bread, cakes, cookies, and even as a binder for recipes like vegan meatballs.

Using plant-based alternatives to eggs in your cooking is a great way to cut down on the negative aspects of eggs while still enjoying the delicious dishes you're used to having. Some of the best pulse flours include pea hull fibers, whole or split yellow and green pea, navy, pinto, and black bean, chickpea, and all colors of lentil flour. The trick is to buy whole flours and not split ones.

To use as an egg replacer, you'll need to mix the pulse flour with water to reconstitute. Usually, it is just equal amounts of flour and water. 1/4 cup flour and 1/4 cup water equal one egg.

To replace eggs in cooking, just make sure that you're using the substitute that provides the nearest scientific reaction you're looking for. Whether it's binding, foaming, or flavor, using the right ingredient at the right time in the way the directions state is vital to ensure that your recipes turn out well. But don't shy away from using these egg replacers because they're amazing, healthy, and you'll fall in love with them.

Using Pulses as a Meat Substitute

The great thing about pulses, beans, lentils, and peas is that they can grow with less water than their meat counterparts, even in dry places. Yet, they're full of protein, vitamins, and minerals. They're good for you, good for the planet, and as a meat substitute they are surprisingly flavorful.

Try New Recipes

Instead of trying to recreate your family favorites when you first start using pulses to replace meat, try brand new recipes. As you get accustomed to the unique flavors, you can go back and experiment but when you first start, try new things so that you can enjoy the taste without comparison.

Open Your Mind

It can seem strange at first to replace meat with pulses. But the truth is, you're going to love most of the recipes you cook because the texture and the flavors will be similar due to the high concentration of protein in pulses. Try to think of the meals you make in a new way so that you don't feel as if something is missing. Because the truth is, on a molecular level nothing is missing.

Follow Proper Cooking Procedures

When you first start learning to prepare pulses, each type cooks differently. Learn how to make each type that you want to fix solo in the best way for that type. For example, if you plan to use

chickpeas in a lot of recipes to save money, learn how to cook chickpeas outside of any kind of recipe so that every dish is made the best that it can be.

One for One

When using beans or lentils to replace meat in a soup or chili recipe, use a different type than already called for to add a diversity of flavor and color on a one-to-one basis. If your recipe calls for one pound of ground beef, you'll want to use one pound of cooked beans to replace it. If it calls for one cup cooked meat, you'll use one cup cooked and drained beans. It's that easy.

Soak Your Pulses

Even if you don't technically have to soak lentils, going through with the soaking process does more than you may think. You can reduce your cooking time, ensure that you experience fewer gas pains, and get the right texture based on the recipe that you need.

Since pulses generally have higher protein than meat, are low in fat, and high in fiber, you can be sure to be totally satisfied in every way from your meals prepared with pulses and without meat. The remarkable fact is that the flavors you can create using pulses are even more varied than what you can make with meat. Open your mind and start cooking. Your family and your heart will thank you.

Environmental Impact of Eating Pulses

There is almost no better way for a single individual to lower their carbon footprint than choosing to eat more pulses and beans. Pulses help make the soil healthier, use less water, and because they are so shelf-stable and store easily, they are perfect for feeding people in all parts of the world.

Pulses are merely dry, edible seeds of all the plants that are in the legume family. They include lentils, dry peas, beans, and of course, shelf-stable chickpeas, which are also called garbanzo beans. Most of the things you call legumes are also pulses.

Fewer Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In farming, one of the main problems with greenhouse gases is caused by nitrogen fertilizers. Pulses use far fewer nitrogen fertilizers because they create their own fertilizers from the air and put it in the soil themselves.

Builds Healthy Soil

Because they add nitrogen to the soil on their own, they improve the soil during planting instead of messing it up. They make the soil more hospitable to growing other types of produce. Many farmers like to rotate in pulses every three to five years to improve the soil.

Uses Less Water

Pulses are highly water-efficient plants. They use thousands of gallons less water to produce the same amount of protein that animals can provide. Chicken needs over 80 times the water to produce the same amount of protein as pulses such as lentils produce. This is a win-win, especially for dry areas.

Easy to Feed People

Beans, peas, and lentils are a lot easier to transport, store, and prepare than similarly nutritious options. Many people believe that pulses are the answer to widespread starvation and hunger worldwide. And, for a good reason, because they store well and are easy to adapt to local needs. Not only can genuinely “meaty” and fabulous recipes be made – you can even grow greens right from your pulses by spouting them. It’s truly a complete food all on its own.

Creates Healthier Humans

You may not feel as if your health puts a strain on the environment, but it does. If you’re less healthy, you’re less likely to want to walk for a start.

Pulses are packed with nutrition. They’re low in fat, high in protein, high in fiber, and a low glycemic food. Plus, of course, they’re gluten free. They’re packed with iron, vitamin B, potassium, magnesium, and zinc. It’s a huge plus that pulses also play a role in preventing diseases like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular illnesses.

Many people believe that pulses are one of the most sustainable superfoods that exist. Whether you want to eat beans, chickpeas, lentils, or dry peas, you’re sure to find a wide variety of flavors and textures that you and your entire family will enjoy. The fact that it’s good for the environment is just the icing on the cake.

Eating Pulses and Digestive Issues

Eating more nutrient-packed pulses is associated with lower cholesterol levels, better cardiovascular health, and lower incidents of type II diabetes.

Some people worry about experiencing digestive issues when eating beans, due to gas. Never fear, though – these problems can be sorted by following the tips below.

Soak, Drain and Rinse

Even though it seems like a pain and many cooking appliances and groups claim it's fine to cook beans from dried, it really is going to affect your tummy if you don't go ahead and soak (for 12 hours), drain, and rinse before cooking. If you do this and still get gas, try doing a double soak and rinse by changing the water halfway through.

Start Small

When you first decide to add more pulses to your dishes, start small. Start with one type at a time and add more after you see how your tummy reacts. Beans are not bad for you and the gas is not caused due to something terrible happening, but it may take your digestive tract time to adjust.

Try Different Types

Just because one type of pulse causes you a problem doesn't mean another will. If you've tried the double soak and rinse method and still get more gas than you would from another meal type, check out other types of beans.

Chew Your Food Thoroughly

Not chewing your food thoroughly can cause issues with digestion. The saliva and the chewing motion both signal to your tummy that food is coming, and get the juices flowing. If you're hungry enough for your mouth to water before eating, this always helps.

Check Your Recipes

Other food – like potatoes, for example – can change how you digest beans. Plus, eating too much sugar or eating too many types of protein in one meal can also cause digestive issues, because each kind of protein requires a different enzyme to digest it properly.

Eat Your Leafy Greens

Half your plate should be full of leafy greens at every single meal, including when you eat a bean meal. The enzymes in the leafy greens will help you digest the rest of your meal better too.

Add a Digestive Enzyme

You can also add a digestive enzyme to your meal like "Beano" if you want to try that. Most people, with time and proper preparation, don't need to worry about using an enzyme. However, using one doesn't affect the flavor or harm you in any way.

In some countries they use seaweed, ginger, turmeric, and even fennel in the recipe, which helps with digestion. It really depends on how you like your beans. Another thing you can do is start with easy to digest beans like mung beans, which are often fed to children and the elderly in some cultures due to the ease with which they are digested.