

BRILLANT B-E-A-N

SALLY AND MARTIN STONE



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For Abby, Matt, our friends and family

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INTRODUCTION

Beans have never been chic. They have always been peasant food, to be eaten when meat was unavailable, hard to come by, or, more to the point, too expensive. But today, as we rediscover the delights and satisfactions of peasant food (a.k.a. home cooking), we're confirming what most of us already knew or suspected: that although inexpensive, beans taste very good indeed and are one of the most nutritious of all foods on the hoof or off the vine.

To give beans more panache, food writers and aficionados lump them together with the new American cuisine—most of which arrived with its practitioners on Ellis Island. Most beans are not naturalized, however: they are indigenous. Like the Indians, beans, with four or five exceptions, were here to begin with, or were growing in Central or South America long before Columbus postulated that the world was round. They are reverse immigrants. They

emigrated from the Western Hemisphere to Europe and then came back disguised—as though they had never set root here before. And they have most of us fooled.

All the cuisines of the world have in their repertoires intoxicating dishes based on beans and peas. You'll think at once of the cassoulet of France, the *dal* of India, the feijoada of Brazil, the black bean soup of Spain, the *frijoles refritos* of Mexico, the *hummus* of the Middle East, the *pasta e fagioli* of Italy, the stir-fried tofu and peapods of China, the bean paste of Japan, and, of course, the baked beans of New England and the black-eyed peas of the South.

On these pages we've taken these dishes and scores of others, turned them inside out and upside down, changed them, adapted them, invented and reinvented them to make beans right for the new American cooking: lighter, healthier, and quicker to prepare.

WHAT IS A BEAN?

Did you know that kidney beans are the mature, dried seeds of the vegetable that, when picked young, we eat pods and all as green beans? Or that alfalfa is a legume?

A legume, according to the dictionary, is a vegetable that is the seed of a plant having pods. A peanut is really a legume, not a nut.

Because all legumes absorb nitrogen from the air, they are rich sources of protein and are useful in maintaining the fertility of the soil. It is this, also, that makes them legumes and distinguishes them from other vegetables.

Beans have a long and interesting history going back millennia. They were one of the first wild plants to be domesticated. Their use as a life-sustaining nourishment before the advent of domesticated animals is well known but little exploited in our affluent, carnivorous society.

TODAY'S HEALTH FOOD

It is only recently that medical research has proclaimed beans a near-perfect food, touting them especially as a preventive of many

modern ills. They are superior to bread, cereals, potatoes, and pasta as a source of carbohydrates for diabetics and joggers. They are an excellent source of dietary fiber (promoting regularity and keeping colon cancer at bay). They help control blood cholesterol and blood glucose while being free of cholesterol themselves. They help control weight by retaining water in the digestive tract, thus promoting a feeling of fullness and delaying the return of hunger.

Most of the calories in beans and peas come from complex carbohydrates (starches), which, unlike fats, have no history of risk to health. Beans derive only a minuscule percentage of their calories from fat, 2 to 6 percent, as contrasted with meat or cheese, which derive 80 percent and 75 percent of their calories from fat respectively. Soybeans are an exception (they're used as a commercial source for oil, remember) with 34 percent fat calories. However, as is the case with all beans, the fat in soybeans is polyunsaturated.

Besides being cholesterol-free, beans have, according to recent research, a chemical that helps fight the deposit of platelets (fat globules) in veins and arteries.

Although the protein in beans and peas may not be complete, as is that in animal foods (soybeans do provide complete protein), it can, with the addition of small amounts of grain foods or animal protein such as milk, cheese, bits of meat, poultry, or fish, offer protein as useable and total as that of meat alone. At the same time they are providing this protein at a fraction of the cost. Useable is the key word here. The recent release of a new set of federal dietary guidelines and changes in recommended daily dietary allowances under review by the National Academy of Sciences point to new theories that may prove the protein content of beans and peas complete enough to replace animal protein.

Mature legumes (in addition to peas and green beans, which are really picked before they are allowed to develop fully) are chockfull of vitamins and minerals. They're well endowed with the B vitamins: thiamine, niacin, B_6 , and folic acid. About a cup of cooked beans provides as much as 40 percent of adult daily needs for thiamine and B_6 .

Women especially can benefit from eating beans. A cup of lentils, for instance, offers a quarter of the daily recommended requirement of iron. The body is helped to absorb this high iron content when the lentils are eaten with foods high in vitamin E such as tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, and citrus fruits or juices. Luckily, lentils are compatible with all these foods.

Other important minerals plentiful in peas and beans include calcium, phosphorus, and potassium.

Beans are a boon to diabetics and hypogly-cemics because eating them doesn't trigger a rise in blood sugar or require that the pancreas pour out extra quantities of insulin to readjust the glucose level in the blood. Carbohydrate foods like bread, cereals, potatoes, and pasta cause the body to release insulin. The release of insulin promotes the storage of body fat. Since beans do not trigger outpourings of insulin, eating them actually helps to flush away fats rather than allowing the body to store them away for future use as fuel. Thus it is important for those on weight-loss diets to avoid most carbohydrate foods and switch to beans.

Beans also give you more volume and weight of food for the number of calories ingested (2½ to 4 times the volume for the calorie equivalent of meat or cheese). What's more, their fiber content sends them on a clean sweep through the digestive system. As a result, you feel you've eaten more (which in fact you have); you feel full and satisfied because the beans absorb moisture and increase in bulk as they travel through the intestines.

But one of the best things about beans and weight control is that the body uses up more calories digesting beans and peas than most other foods. So some of the calories you eat by choosing beans don't really count!

Lest you misunderstand, this is neither a diet book nor a health-food book; it is certainly not a vegetarian cookbook, even though it has many recipes vegetarians can use. This is a cookbook for people who like to eat elegant, delicious, interesting food. It just so happens that the subject of the book is good for what ails you.

RUNNING HOT AND COLD

There are over 14,000 species in the leguminosae family although only 22 are grown in any quantity for human consumption. They thrive today in a wide range of climatic conditions. Because it was native to the cold uplands of Peru, the lima bean can tolerate colder, temperate latitudes. The soybean likes the warmth of summers in Mongolia and our own plains states. The haricot thrives in the Mediterranean climates (who doesn't!) and pigeon peas prefer the hot, humid tropics. Anywhere they are grown—and they can be grown even in relatively poor soilthe yield per acre is high and the soil becomes more fertile than it was before (they play an important role in the farming practice of crop rotation, absorbing nitrogen from the air through their root systems and passing it on into the soil).

BEAN BASICS

IF YOU DON'T KNOW BEANS ABOUT BEANS

It is not easy to identify by sight all the different kinds of beans available in the market. What we describe here are the more familiar varieties, including as many names in common use as we could discover (some beans have as many as fifteen different colloquial names depending upon the region of the country or the ethnic group. We also describe their distinguishing features, including special nutritional qualities; we give suggestions for their uses in cooking and mention some of their traditional culinary partners and seasonings; and we indicate which are best fresh, dried, or frozen. Some by-products are also given.

The more you know about the many varieties of beans available—their colors, sizes, and flavors—the more versatile and useful you'll find them in the kitchen. The beans described here belong to the legume family, the third largest group of flowering plants (the other two being the orchid and the daisy). After grains, beans are the second most important food in fueling the human body. Some are eaten in the pod: snow peas, string beans, yard-long beans, among many. Some are shelled fresh: lima beans, black-eyed peas, green peas. Others are dried to be stored and reconstituted by soaking: chick-peas, Great Northerns, kidney and navy beans are in this group. Many are used in all three ways as well as being canned and frozen

ADZUKI (*Phaseolus angularis*) a.k.a. Azuki, Aduki, Adsuki, Asuki, Feijao

The adzuki is a small (1/4-inch long), oval, reddish-brown bean with a thin white keel, or ridge. It has been grown and eaten in China and Japan for thousands of years. It even looks Asian, as though it had been designed by a contemporary Japanese graphic artist. Adzukis are bush beans (they grow on bushes rather than vines) and are eaten fresh, dried. sprouted, and ground into flour. The adzuki is so versatile and delicious with its light, nutty flavor that is it known in Asia as the "king of beans" and is used for both savory and sweet dishes. In Japan these beans are steamed with rice to give the grain a pink blush as in the festival wedding dish, Sekihan. They are also made into candied bean cakes and other confections and served with green tea at the end of a meal. These beans are wonderful simply boiled and served with butter or in salads. Because their skin is quite thick, they need long soaking and should be cooked for about 2 hours. Adzukis are an excellent source of protein (25 percent), iron and other minerals, calcium, thiamine, and other B-group vitamins. They are available from health-food, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and yoga stores.

BLACK BEANS (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) a.k.a. Turtle Beans, Frijoles Negros, Mexican Blacks, Spanish Black Beans

A large (5/8-inch long), kidney-shaped bean, shiny black in color with a white keel, it is a native of South America and is used throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean, where it is a staple to be boiled, fried, spiced, and mixed with rice and other foods. The black bean has a slightly mushroomy flavor and is traditionally made into black bean soup in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Spain. In Brazil it is the basis of feijoada, the national dish. In the West Indies it is a major source of protein in the rice and bean combination that in Cuba is called Moros y Christianos (Moors and Christians). Black beans take about 1 hour to cook after soaking for 4 hours. (See quick soak method, p. 22.) They contain about 23 percent protein and good quantities of iron, calcium, and the B vitamins. They are available in most supermarkets, health-food stores, and Hispanic markets.

BLACK-EYED PEAS (Vigna unguiculata) a.k.a. Brown-eyed Peas, Black-eyed Beans, Cowpeas, Oea Beans, China Beans, Marble Beans, Black-eyed Suzies

A creamy-colored, kidney-shaped bean, medium-sized (½ inch), with a purplish black keel that distinguishes it from other beans and, of course, suggested the popular name. Probably a native of China (a relative of the mung bean and other Asian legumes), the black-eyed pea no doubt traveled the Silk Route, ended up in Arab hands, and found its way to Africa. From there it was brought to the Western Hemisphere by slaves and became established in the plantation diet early in the eighteenth century. These beans are still used in many African dishes, and in Indian cooking as well. Black-eyed peas have a light, smooth texture and a subtly savory flavor. Because they have

a thin skin, the beans may be cooked without presoaking. They should be checked for doneness after 30 minutes. Overcooking makes them disintegrate, as does too many turns of the mixing spoon.

The young pod of the fresh beans may be eaten as a vegetable and its leafy shoot is said to taste like Swiss chard. The beans add texture to salads, take easily to seasoning, can be made into fritters, and go well with yogurt. They are superlative with rice, as in the southern dish Hoppin' John (originally made with pigeon peas, called in the French-speaking islands of the Caribbean pois à pigeon and pronounced ah-pee-jon, hence "Hoppin' John"). Black-eyed peas contain about 22 percent protein, some iron, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, vitamin B complex—and some vitamin A, unlike most beans. They are available in supermarkets all over the country. Dried blackeyed peas can be bought loose and in plastic bass (90 percent of these are from California). The cooked peas are sold both canned and frozen.

BROAD BEANS (see Fava Beans)

BROWN BEANS (Phaseolus vulgaris) a.k.a. Swedish Beans

These small (1/3 inch) oval brown beans take their nickname from the people who use them the most. In Scandinavia they are used for sweetened purees to be served with smoked pork or ham, and for other lusty dishes. They are not widely available here. Try Scandinavian specialty food shops, gourmet sections of department stores, or simply substitute small white beans.

CANNELLINI BEANS (Phaseolus vulgaris) a.k.a. Fasolia

This member of the haricot bean family was originally cultivated in Argentina. Cannellini beans are now associated with Italian cuisine and are grown commercially in Italy. They are white, oval in shape, medium-sized (about ½

inch), with a tough seed coat. Their texture is smooth and they have a subtly nutty flavor. These are the favored beans for *pasta e fagioli* (recipe page 88) and other Tuscan dishes. You will find them canned in most supermarkets. They have the same protein and nutritive value as others of the genus *Phaseolus*.

CHANNA DAL (Pisum stivum) a.k.a. Chenna, Chanai, Arhar Dal, Toor Dal, Tur, Toer, Toovar Dal, Ooloonthoo, Pigeon Peas

These are yellow split peas grown and eaten in India and parts of Southeast Asia. Small (1/4 inch) and round, they come hulled and split and are rather soft, so they cook quickly. Channa dal is used alone, in rice, meat, and vegetable dishes and as a puree. When ground, they are sometimes substituted for chick-pea flour because they are easier to grind at home. When packed in castor oil, channa dal are known as toer, tur, arhar, or tooyar dal. The oil is used as a preservative and to discourage insects. It should be washed off in several changes of water. The taste of these dal is a little different from that of channa dal because of the oil, but they may be used for the same purposes. Substitute American yellow split peas for the same texture, but don't expect the flavor to be nearly so nutty. These are a source of iron, vitamin B-and protein, of course. They are available in Indian and Asian markets.

CHICK-PEAS (Cicer arietinum) a.k.a. Garbanzos, Ceci, Hummus

The Romans named this bean *arietinum* (ramlike) because it looked like a ram's head with horns curling over the sides. *Cicer* is the bean itself. The venerable Roman family name of Cicero is derived from this bean, which was a staple of the ancients' diet. Round, beige, medium-sized (3/8 inches in diameter), with a beaklike sprout, chick-peas are among the most versatile of all the legumes. They have a nutty

taste and a firm texture. It is almost impossible to overcook them. Chick-peas originated in North Africa and the Middle East, where they were first cultivated around 5000 B.C. The Carthaginians introduced the chick-pea into Europe through Spain, where they are called *garbanzos* (derived from Greek), and where they still play an important part in regional cooking.

Chick-peas are widely grown in India and Burma, where they rival wheat in acreage under cultivation (more than three-quarters the acreage of wheat). They are India's most important legume, finding their way to the table boiled, fried, roasted, in fritters, sprouted, made into soups, and ground into flour to use as a thickener for stews and sauces and for making dumplings and pancakes. We have found the puree useful for replacing flour in several classic and improvised cake recipes. Perhaps the most popular dish made from chick-peas is the Middle Eastern hummus, a paste with many variations but whose principal ingredients are the puree to which garlic, tahini (sesame paste), oil, a bit of paprika, and lemon juice are added. The rich, full flavor of the bean makes it perfect for pâtés, pies, casseroles, and soups. The chick-pea is one of the most nutritious members of the bean family, rich in protein, calcium, iron, and the B group of vitamins. Extremely hard, these legumes usually need long soaking. They are widely available both dried and canned.

DAL (Dhal)

Dal is the generic name the Indians give to legumes—lentils, peas, and beans. Dal are used hulled or unhulled, roasted or unroasted, and are basic to Indian cooking because they are a good source of protein, iron, and the B vitamins.

FAVA BEANS (Vicia faba) a.k.a. Faba, Broad Bean, Horse Bean

The fava (it appears here in its Italian guise) was the only bean known to Europeans before