

Preparing Abstaining Meals During Fasts: Beans

Two Ways to Prepare Beans, Legumes, Nuts and Grains for Better Digestion and Nutrition

During fast and abstinence seasons, it is traditional to cook with protein sources such as beans, lentils and other legumes, nuts and grains, In lieu of animal products.

Unfortunately, these foods are difficult to digest for several reasons. Beans, legumes, nuts and grains are seeds that last indefinitely until the conditions are right for the new plant to grow: water and warmth. They contain phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors to prevent their sprouting too soon. Alas, these two substances are the culprits in making our alternate protein sources so hard to digest. Phytic acid, also called phytate in its salt form, is the principal storage form of phosphorus in plant seeds. When eaten by us, it binds with minerals in the intestines and removes them from the body, thereby preventing or reducing those minerals being absorbed. Enzyme inhibitors interfere with our body's own enzymes used to digest food.

The First Way is Soaking

1. The best solution is to soak these foods in advance of cooking them. Soaking neutralizes phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors and breaks down difficult-to-digest complex sugars. Just as water helps plants grow into seedlings, soaking makes this food more digestible. It also helps break down the complex sugars, which contributes to indigestion with beans.

How to Soak Beans, Nuts and Grains

Beans and Lentils - Rinse and cover 2 cups of beans with warm water. Leave in a warm place or even on the countertop for 12-72 hours, depending on the size of the bean. Replace the soaking water several times a day. Drain. Rinse. Place in a large pot, cover with water and bring to a boil. Periodically skim off the foam, which contains impurities. Add a spoonful of baking soda. (Earlier recommendations called for adding an acid to the soaking water, but this is now disputed.) Reduce the heat,

cover and simmer for 4-8 hours or cook in a crock pot. Add more water as necessary to keep the food covered. Season with 4 cloves of pressed garlic before simmering and/or with sea salt and pepper after cooking is complete.

Nuts - Soak 4 cups of raw nuts overnight in a warm place with about 1 tablespoon of sea salt and enough water to cover. Drain and spread on a stainless steel baking pan and place in a warm oven (no more than 150 degrees) for 12 to 24 hours, stirring occasionally, until completely dry and crisp. Store in an airtight container.

Grains - For oatmeal, soak 1 cup of oats (rolled or cracked or steel cut) in 1 cup of warm filtered water plus 2 tablespoons of whey, yogurt, kefir, buttermilk, lemon juice or vinegar. Place in a warm place for 7 to 24 hours. Cook in an additional cup of water with ½ teaspoon of sea salt for about 5 minutes.

Flour - Use a sourdough starter and recipe when possible or soak flour products for 12 to 24 hours with some whey, yogurt, kefir, buttermilk, lemon juice or vinegar.

The Second Way is Sprouting

2. A second excellent method for improving digestion and increasing the nutrient value is to sprout these foods.

How to Sprout Beans, Legumes and Seeds

Fill a mason jar 1/3 full and add water to the top of the jar. Use a screen in the lid and after soaking overnight, pour off the water and keep jar tipped on its side to drain water and allow air to circulate. Rinse every few hours or at least twice a day and the contents will sprout in 1-4 days depending on the size. Rinse well and store in fridge with a solid lid. Eat lightly steamed or added to soups and casseroles, but not raw.

Helpful Tips

--Add a strip of seaweed called Kombu and/or add a bay leaf to the beans during cooking to help digestion and reduce intestinal gas.

--Wait until the end of cooking time to add tomato products to beans, otherwise beans remain hard.

--Some people find they can reduce intestinal gas by changing the cooking water half way through. In this case, wait until the second round to add Kombu, bay leaf or garlic.

A good resource is the book, *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon, 2001 by New Trends Publishing, Inc.

Check your library for a copy!

A quote from the authors:

Most of these anti-nutrients are part of the seed's system of preservation—they prevent sprouting until the conditions are right. Plants need moisture, warmth, time and slight acidity in order to sprout. Proper preparation of grains is a kind and gentle process that imitates the process that occurs in nature. It involves soaking for a period in warm, acidulated water in the preparation of porridge, or long, slow sour dough fermentation in the making of bread. Such processes neutralize phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors. Vitamin content increases, particularly B vitamins. Tannins, complex sugars, gluten and other difficult-to-digest substances are partially broken down into simpler components that are more readily available for absorption.

~Sally Fallon and Mary Enig

[Be Kind to Your Grains...And Your Grains Will Be Kind to You](#)

Additional reading - 2 articles below:

How to Soak Legumes and Beans with Whey and Baking Soda

Last Updated: Aug 16, 2013 | By Christiane Minnick

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/486157-how-to-soak-legumes-and-beans-with-whey-and-baking-soda/>



Photo Caption Soaking dried beans with whey or baking soda helps to fully digest them. Photo Credit Comstock/Comstock/Getty Images

As many methods of preparing dried beans and other legumes exist as cookbooks to explain them. If beans and other legumes make up a large part of your diet -- if you are a vegetarian, for instance -- you need to get as much nutritional benefit from these foods as possible, which means breaking down the enzyme inhibitors and complex sugars that can prevent you from fully digesting them. Depending on the dried legumes you use, soaking them in water with an acid ingredient, such as fresh whey, or an alkaline ingredient, such as baking soda, starts the process.

Step 1

Use an acid ingredient such as whey for dried black beans, lentils, fava beans or garbanzo beans. Pour 2 cups of the dried beans into a bowl large enough to accommodate their swelling. Cover them with warm, filtered water and add 2 tbsp. of fresh whey -- the liquid from drained yogurt is ideal. Drape a clean dish towel over the bowl and let it sit in a warm location 8 hours for lentils, and 24 hours for larger beans.

Step 2

Use an alkaline ingredient such as baking soda for kidney beans, white beans, and split peas. Pour 2 cups of the dried beans into a bowl large enough to accommodate their swelling. Cover them with warm, filtered water and add a pinch -- about 1/8 tsp. -- of baking soda. Drape a clean dish towel over the bowl and let it sit in a warm location -- 10 hours for split peas, and 24 hours for kidney beans and white beans.

Step 3

Drain the beans or other legumes when they're finished soaking and rinse them with fresh water. Add them to a soup pot or a slow cooker with enough filtered water to cover them by several inches.

Step 4

Bring the beans or other legumes to a boil and skim off any foam that rises to the top. Turn the heat down so that beans simmer gently and cook, partially covered, until they are soft, about 4 hours. Add aromatics, such as crushed garlic cloves, chopped onions or herbs, as the beans cook. If you're using a slow cooker, set it on "High" to start, and after the beans start simmering, turn it to "Low" and let them cook 8 hours or until they're tender.

<http://www.nourishingdays.com/2011/03/why-beans-are-hard-to-digest-8-tips-for-making-them-easier-on-the-belly/>

Why Beans Are Hard to Digest & 8 Tips For Making Them Easier on the Belly

By [Shannon](#) On March 8, 2011 · [41 Comments](#) · In [cooking](#), [nourishing food](#)



Beans are beloved by many for their frugality and protein content. They can be delicious and filling, but they can also cause some (ahem) serious issues.

The obvious of these is gas, but bloating, cramping, and indigestion can also occur after eating beans. Beans also contain [phytic acid](#) which can strip your body of minerals.

Not surprisingly, though, traditional cultures ate beans for thousands of years and used slow-food type methods for making them more digestible. From fermenting to soaking to sprouting, we can learn a lot from these traditional cultures. And when you can make a pot of soup that will serve 8 people for \$2 I just can't pass them up.

So at least once a week I dig out some dried beans or legumes, usually for one of the super easy slow-cooker bean soups in [Simple Food {for winter}](#). And while we still find beans to be harder to digest than say meat or [vegetables](#), I have found belly comfort using some of the techniques our foremothers employed.

What Makes Them So Hard to Digest?

Besides [the phytic acid](#) contained in legumes, the harder beans such as kidney and navy beans contain oligosaccharides. **This complex sugar is impossible to digest without some help because humans do not produce the enzyme alpha-galactosidase needed to properly break it down.**

A great article from the [Weston A Price Foundation](#) says...

When consumed, these oligosaccharides reach the lower intestine largely intact, and in the presence of anaerobic bacteria ferment and produce carbon dioxide and methane gases, as well as a good deal of discomfort, not to mention embarrassment in polite society. ([source](#))

They said it, not me.

Preparing Them For Better Digestion

The most important aspect to preparing beans properly is to start the process a couple of days before you actually want to cook them. I use the following principles in preparing beans:

Sprout Those That Sprout. The only two legumes that I find sprout easily are lentils and garbanzo beans. These are easily sprouted using [this method](#).

Soak Them For At Least 48 Hours. Not just "overnight" as many [recipes](#) call for, but for 1-3 days. The longer they are soaked the easier they are to digest.

Soak in Very Warm, Alkaline Water. The above article states that a temperature between 120 and 148 is ideal, as the enzyme needed to break down the oligosaccharide is killed at 150 degrees. The pH of the water is also a concern and hard water should be avoided. The science geek in me wants to get the thermometer and litmus paper out and get it just right, but the mama in me knows this is impractical. So I just use very warm, filtered water instead of our hard water.

Change the Water Often. Three times per day I drain off the water, cover them in more water to rinse, drain, and then cover again with very warm water to soak. Changing the water often allows you to discard any anti-nutrients leached from the bean.

Cook Them Long & Slow. Whether you sprouted them or soaked them try to cook them over low heat for a very long time. A slow-cooker works well, as does a low-heat in an oven or on a burner. Cooking beans all day gives them time to break down those hard-to-digest fibers.

Sprouting works best with lentils and garbanzo beans.
Add a bay leaf to help with "tummy troubles."

We soak ours for 3 days, in the crock pot on warm with the lid off (tea towel over to keep fingers out). I do a huge pot-full at once, since, well, it's 3 days I can't use my crockpot! 😊 I add baking soda to the soaking water, and use kombu & stock when cooking. If I do ANY less than 3 days, or skip any of the additions, we all suffer! But they are such a great, CHEAP option, it definitely worth the hassle.

One of the wonderful things I learned on my real food journey is that Eden Organics actually soaks their beans properly and cooks them with kombu, then packages them in a can with a BPA-free lining. We don't eat a lot of beans because they irritate my husband's IBS, but when I make them for myself, it's nice to know that I do have that convenience available.

Cook in beef or chicken stock - something about stock that aids in digestion and bean soups simmered in stock are almost always easier on the belly than bean soups simmered in water.

