

BEANS, BEANS, GOOD FOR YOUR ?



Over many thousands of years, the humble bean has made its way across the globe, becoming a central ingredient in the cuisine of many cultures. Perhaps the most well known bean dishes are those coming out of Mexico and other parts of South America such as Chilli Con Carne, Frijoles Refritos (refried beans) and their common companion 'Nachos'. However, many other countries use beans in delicious signature dishes such as the rustic bean dishes of Southern Italy, the robust and hearty dishes enjoyed across the African continent, the sweet bean pastes reminiscent of Asia, and who's not to dismiss the English folk for bringing us the all time favourite, baked beans.

Aside from the enjoyable flavours and great culinary variety beans can bring to our diet, they also have many health benefits. Being rich in protein and amino acids and in particular the amino acid Lysine, beans are known to help in the prevention of cold sores.

White beans contain very high levels of phosphatidylserine, an amino acid compound that is known for its role in cognitive function. This tiny molecule has been found to produce significant benefits on mental stress, memory, and muscle recovery from exercise. Some of the more notable white beans include Great Northern, Cannellini and Navy beans. The latter got their name after being a staple in the Navy during the 1900's (probably due to its high protein and nutrient content).

Beans are one of the most versatile ingredients to have in your kitchen. Pinto, Cannellini and Navy beans are great in casserole dishes and are perfect for making baked beans. Black Turtle and Black-eyed beans are excellent for soups and stews and Chickpeas are perfect for making dips, falafel and veggie patties. Red Kidney and Adzuki beans, you can do almost any thing with including desserts. Then of course there is the popular Mung bean that is perfect for sprouting to eat in salads or for making vegetarian curries and dahls.

All beans are best soaked overnight and rinsed before cooking, which makes them much easier to digest. Caution needs to be taken with kidney beans as they contain a toxin when they are raw and need to be boiled for 30 minutes before eating.

Beans are the perfect year round food as you can add every type of warming spice to them in the winter and eat them in cooling salads in the summer.

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