

Kitchen Hack: Beans Instead of Meat

The research is clear: **beans are a superior choice to ground beef** when it comes to fiber and saturated fat. Beans have almost half the calories, roughly 20 fewer grams of fat, and 6 grams more fiber than the same serving of ground beef.

Now let's talk price. Ground beef usually costs between \$5.69 to \$6.79 a pound, while canned pinto beans cost roughly \$1.12 per pound and a pound of dried beans will run about \$2.19 (and yield 6 cups of cooked beans). So the pocketbook savings is about 6 times for beans versus beef.

Small changes are usually easier to incorporate into a cooking routine than large, sweeping ones. That's where this kitchen hack comes in. My favorite bean dishes — where I can easily get away with replacing all or some of the meat with pinto beans or black beans — include chili and spaghetti sauce. I also love serving bean soups, burritos, and quesadillas because everyone loves them. I sneak lentils into rice quite often, too. To implement this kitchen hack, the first and most obvious step is to **make sure that you actu-**



ally have beans in your kitchen. Here is a beginner's list of the 4 legumes that we would recommend...

- **Pinto beans** are some of the most palatable and versatile options in the store. You can grind them up to make refried beans or bean dip, they can be used in place of part of the ground beef for almost all recipes, and canned ones can be instantly opened, drained, rinsed, and added to any dish. Dried pinto beans cook very quickly and can be made into ranch-style beans.
- **Black beans** look very attractive. You can add them to salsa, soups, chili, burritos, and quesadillas. They can make a wonderful soup or side dish. Canned ones always get used up fast but the dried ones are worth the effort for soups and Cuban style black bean dishes.
- **Lentils** cook very fast and do not need soaking ahead of time. They make a perfect addition to salads or a fun side dish. Green and brown lentils hold their shape well, while black French lentils are the most delicious (in my opinion). Red lentils puree really well into soups too.
- **White beans** are wonderful when added to soups. Why not serve a vegetarian soup for dinner? Or add white beans in place of chicken in a pasta dish?

The key to success is to replace at least half of the meat with the appropriate bean. By using beans in place of some or all of the ground meat in your favorite recipes you will be able to incorporate them easily.

By Judy Doherty, PC II, AOS, BS

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