

Information Concerning Beans

Beans may be soaked overnight or the quick soak method may be used. Bring beans and water to a boil and boil 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand at least 1 hour. Proceed with cooking as though beans were soaked overnight.

Baking soda may be added when soaking and cooking beans in hard water to help them cook to a softer texture. Add no more than 1/4 teaspoon per pound of beans during the soaking period. Any more will destroy the thiamine in the beans.

According to Dr. Joseph Rackis of the USDA, flatulence from legumes results when undigested complex sugars in the lower intestine are acted upon by naturally occurring bacteria. These complex sugars (called trisaccharides) are water soluble, and soaking and frequent rinsing of the beans wash them away.

Some ways to cut the physical discomfort associated with beans are as follows:

1. Some beans are less gas-producing and some more. This varies from person to person, but in general, adzuki beans, mung beans, split peas, lima beans, and lentils are the most digestible.
2. Discard the soaking water and cook the beans in fresh water.
3. Sprouting helps due to the rinsing done during the sprouting process.
4. Eat beans more often. Those who eat beans infrequently are more troubled with flatulence. There is greater intestinal tolerance after three weeks of eating beans regularly.
5. Eat smaller amounts per serving.
6. Drink more fluids.
7. Chewing well and slowly helps minimize the problem.
8. Getting plenty of exercise improves your digestion in general.

Do not mix newly purchased beans with older beans. Since older beans take longer to cook, mixing will result in uneven cooking.

Moisture content above 10% and heat speed up hardening of stored beans. When beans become hard they will not soften by soaking and cooking. When this happens, crack them as you would crack corn or grain. This can be done in a hand grinder or by placing the beans in a heavy paper sack and pounding them with the side of a hammer. After cracking, soak and cook them. Hard beans can also be ground into flour and used as a thickener, cooked to make refried beans or put in creamed soups.

Salt and season beans AFTER cooking. Salt, especially, will slow the absorption of water and the softening of the beans.