

Complete Guide To Cooking Dried Peas and Beans

Dried peas and beans are great for making a hearty soup, a pot of chili, or a simple side dish. This guide will walk you through every step of the process, from sorting out debris to the best cooking methods.

Shopping for dried peas or beans

Find the section in your grocery store with dried peas and beans. You will quickly see how affordable they are. Many local grocery stores carry a wide variety. They are much less expensive than canned veggies. One bag can be divided into two meals for a small family.

Sorting and Cleaning: Removing Rocks and Sticks

Before cooking, it's essential to sort and rinse your dried peas or beans. Since they typically grow on the ground, they sometimes contain small rocks, dirt, or sticks.

1. Spread the beans on a clean countertop or pour them into a colander.
2. Look for and remove any foreign objects, such as rocks, sticks, or shriveled beans. Remove those items and toss them into the trash.
3. Rinse thoroughly under cold water to remove dust or debris. Drain before cooking.

Soaking Methods: Do You Really Need to Soak?

Soaking beans before cooking helps them soften, reduces cooking time, and can improve digestibility. Here are three soaking methods to choose from:

1. Overnight Soak Method (Preferred method)

- Place beans in a large bowl and cover them completely with water.
- Let them soak for 8-12 hours or overnight.
- Drain and rinse before cooking. Discard the water you soaked them in. Do not use that water for cooking.

2. Fast Soak Method

- Place dried beans in a large pot and cover with water.
- Bring to a boil for 2 minutes, then turn off the heat.
- Cover and let sit for 1 hour.
- Drain, rinse, and add them back to the pot, cover with water, and continue cooking.

3. No Soak Method

If you don't have time to soak, you can still cook dried beans, but they will take a few hours, maybe between 2 and 4 hours, to get done. Keep an eye on them and refill the liquid when it cooks down. The liquid is soaked up into the peas or beans, and some of it evaporates during the cooking process. It is important to keep an eye on the liquid. Not many things make the house smell as bad as a pot of scorched beans!

How To Season Dried Peas or Beans

There are multiple ways to season dried peas or beans. It really depends on how you intend to use them.

Herbs and Spices

If you are cooking dried peas or beans as a side dish, you can use any of a variety of herbs or spices, such as Bay leaves, Thyme, Oregano, Herbs de Provence, Cumin, or even Chili Powder. If you are cooking Pinto beans, Black beans, or Kidney beans to be used in a pot of chili, use chili powder for seasoning.

Meaty Seasonings

Ham has been used for ages to season dried peas or beans. I always save scrappy pieces of ham any time we have baked ham. I freeze an appropriate amount in Ziploc freezer bags and use them for seasoning. I add the frozen ham when I put the beans on to cook. You can also buy ham pieces in the meat department at your grocery store. You can use other forms of pork, such as Country style ribs.

Vegetable seasonings

Onions, celery, carrots, and garlic are commonly used to season dried peas or beans while they are cooking. One of my favorite soup recipes is this one for [Country Style 15 Bean Soup](#), which is seasoned with country-style ribs, carrots, celery, onions, and garlic. This is a great example of how herbs, vegetables, and the right meat can add loads of flavor to a pot of beans.

Don't be afraid to use any combination of the three seasoning methods for your own recipe.

Stovetop Cooking Method

1. Place soaked beans in a pot and cover with fresh water or chicken broth (about 2 inches above the beans).
2. Add your seasoning according to the recipe you are using.
3. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a simmer.
4. Cook until tender (typically 1-3 hours, depending on the bean variety).
5. If you are serving the peas or beans as a side dish, do not drain before serving. The liquid is called pot liquor. Some people enjoy the pot liquor with their cornbread.

Crockpot Method

First, sort and remove any debris. Rinse in a colander. Then proceed. You do not have to soak before cooking in the Crockpot, but you can if you like to reduce the cook time. It depends on how soon you need these peas or beans to be on the table.

Unsoaked Peas: Place your dried peas or beans in the Crockpot. Cover with water or chicken broth. Add your choice of seasonings. Cook on high for about 4 -5 hours or low for about 6-8 hours.

Soaked Peas: Place your dried peas or beans in the Crockpot. Cover with water or chicken broth. Add your choice of seasonings. Cook on high for about 3 1/2 – 4 1/2 hours or low for about 5 1/2 – 6 1/2 hours.

NOTE: Crockpot temperatures may vary, which means your final amount of cook time could vary slightly.