

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Two full weeks into the New Year, and how are you doing? Still sticking to the new menu? How about the extra exercise? Did you get your black eyed peas and rice for good luck on New Year's Day? If you did, count that as a healthy meal and keep up the good work!

According to some histories of food in the US, the name Hoppin' John came from a man with one leg who sold the beans and rice dish on the streets of Charleston. His nickname was Hoppin' John, and that became the name for his special version of beans and rice. How it became tied to the idea of good luck for the next year wasn't mentioned in the books. Still, it is a good meal for good health.

Black eyed peas are one of the many kinds of beans and peas that we could be eating more often. What used to be the Protein food group in the old food guide pyramid is now the "Meat and Beans" group in MyPyramid.gov. That's one indication that the experts think beans are a top-notch food. The recommendation is to eat beans instead of meat or fish a least several times a week.

Beans have lots of protein and fiber. They have minerals and vitamins. They don't cost much. They have very little fat and no cholesterol unless you add it. And best of all, there are so many varieties of beans, peas and lentils that there's no excuse for getting bored.

Some people complain that they take too long to cook. But so many kinds are available in cans now, no one has to cook them from scratch unless they want to. If

you're concerned about the sodium, empty the can into a colander and rinse them well. Rinsing won't take out all the salt, but it will reduce it. Peas, split peas and lentils take very little time to cook and don't need to be soaked first.

Other people worry about the gas and embarrassment beans might cause. The problem does not come from fiber or protein but from some special sugars in beans. Our bodies don't have the right enzymes to break these sugars down into energy. The sugars get through our stomach and into our intestines. Bacteria that live in our intestines are more than happy to have those sugars. They use them, make more bacteria, and produce gas in the process. Don't knock the bacteria. They don't harm us, and do produce some B vitamins and healthy fatty acids for us at the same time.

One way to decrease the problem is to eat more beans and other high-fiber foods. As our bodies get used to them there's usually less gas. Another way to cut down on the gas is to get rid of some of those sugars. Rinsing canned beans removes some of the sugars just the way it gets rid of some of the salt.

If you soak dry beans, change the water several times while they soak. After they've boiled 10-20 minutes, pour off that water, and start again with fresh. Add the spices and seasonings after the last change of water. The more often you change the water the less of the smell-producing sugars there will be left. You won't get rid of all of them, but it will help. Unfortunately if you use a crock pot or a pressure cooker to prepare beans there is less chance to remove the sugars. Adding baking soda won't help remove the sugars, will add sodium, and will break down some vitamins. Skip it.

In case Hoppin' John is not your idea of a good meal, here's a much more flavorful and colorful dish. You can use a different combination of beans if you like. You can also add some crumbled Italian sausage for more flavor. The beans are

enough protein without the sausage. Serve over brown rice with a green salad.

Tropical Baked Beans

1 small jicama, peeled and diced	1 15.5-oz. can red beans
1 15.5-oz. can black beans	1 15.5-oz. can navy beans
1 14-oz. can diced tomatoes with liquid	½ cup pitted prunes, diced
1 15-oz. can tropical fruit salad with liquid	1 9-oz. jar mango chutney
3 Tbsp. vinegar	8 oz. Italian sausage, optional

If using sausage, crumble it into skillet and cook over medium heat until browned. Drain on paper towels. Save 1 Tbsp of fat, or use 1 Tbsp oil to saute jicama in same pan for 5 minutes. Combine all ingredients in 3 or 4 qt. casserole dish, or in crockpot. Cover. Bake at 350° F for 1-2 hours. Or cook in crockpot on High for 1 to 2 hours, or on Low for 2 ½ hours. Serves 8.

(Recipe courtesy of NorthHarvest Bean Growers Asso.)

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