

Question of the Month

Why are there so many beans in the HMR entrees?

We are frequently asked why there are so many beans in the HMR entrées, and the answer is simple: Because they're so healthy for you! They are virtually a powerhouse of nutrition and when cooked properly can even reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease.

Black beans, which are a variety of common bean, are indigenous to the Americas and have long been a staple of Latin American cuisine. After being introduced to Europe in the 15th century they have since proliferated throughout the world as an inexpensive protein source.

1 cup of black beans contains 227 calories, less than 1g of fat, 15g of fiber, and 15g of protein. They are also high in manganese, magnesium, thiamin, phosphorus, iron, potassium, and folate as well as phytochemicals associated with reducing the risk of cancer.

A recent study in the Journal of the American College of Nutrition reported that just ½ cup of beans daily was associated with a total drop in cholesterol and LDL of more than 8 percent as compared to only a 2-3 percent drop with ½ cup of oatmeal daily.

A 2003 study in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry found that black beans are high in the antioxidant, anthocyanins and have similar or higher antioxidant contents than some fruits such as cranberries and grapes.

Beans have also been linked to lower blood pressure, body weight, and weight circumference and the high fiber content helps control blood sugar drops after eating.

To get your fill of beans try out the following recipe from *Eating Well* magazine.

Eating Well's Black Bean Soup

This is a zippy Southwestern-flavored black bean soup. We make it with canned beans so it comes together in minutes. If you have leftovers, pack them up in individual serving containers for lunch the next day.

4 servings, about 1 1/4 cups each

Active Time: 15 minutes Total Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 15-ounce cans black beans, rinsed
- 3 cups water
- 1/2 cup prepared salsa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 4 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro (optional)



Preparation

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until beginning to soften, 2 to 3 minutes. Add chili powder and cumin and cook, stirring, 1 minute more. Add beans, water, salsa and salt. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in lime juice.
2. Transfer half the soup to a blender and puree (use caution when pureeing hot liquids). Stir the puree back into the saucepan. Serve garnished with sour cream and cilantro, if desired.

Per serving: 191 calories; 4 g fat (2 g mono); 9 g protein; 9 g fiber; 408 mg sodium; 535 mg potassium.

Nutrition Bonus: Folate (22% daily value), Iron, Potassium & Vitamin C (15% dv).

Excerpt from *Eating Well*, February 2010, pg. 77.