

4 REASONS TO LOVE CANNED BEANS



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Spoiler alert: I am obsessed with canned beans. As a result, this post may come off a bit biased, but it's not my fault. The benefits of beans are practically endless: They are cheap to buy and great for your health, for weight maintenance, and for the earth.

Plus, on a personal note, I have a family history of high cholesterol (which is inextricably linked with heart disease), and beans are an effective dietary option for lowering LDL (the first "L" stands for "lousy") cholesterol levels. I recently read a study that found eating just ½ cup of pinto beans per day reduced total and LDL cholesterol levels by 8%, a very impressive effect for a not-huge portion of yummy food.

Read on for more reasons to jump on the canned bean bandwagon...



1. Proven Health Benefits

“Unsung health hero” is probably not the first thing people think of when passing the canned bean aisle. But this humble, shelf-stable food offers a huge amount of health benefits — all of which are backed by science...

- **Rich in soluble + insoluble fiber (1 cup = 15g!)**
 - Fiber helps cure constipation, lowers colon cancer risk, reduces LDL cholesterol levels, and helps regulate blood sugar. Furthermore, fiber feeds the good bacteria in your gut. A healthy gut microbiome boosts your immune system, synthesizes certain essential vitamins, and helps your body break down potentially toxic food compounds.
- **High in protein, B-vitamins, iron, folate, calcium, potassium, and zinc**
 - For a plant-based food, beans are high in protein (~7g in ½ cup), but they need to be eaten with grains, nuts, or seeds to be a complete source of protein.
 - B-vitamins are necessary for red blood cell production, energy production, metabolism, and the activation of genes.
 - Iron travels through your bloodstream and delivers oxygen to your tissues and organs.
 - Folate plays a major role in preventing anemia and neural tube defects in babies.
 - Calcium and potassium are critical for healthy bones, muscle contraction, and blood clotting.
 - Zinc helps with hundreds of biological functions within the body, including metabolizing all the food you eat, healing from wounds, and absorbing other vitamins like folate.
- **Provide steady energy**
 - Compared to simple and refined carbohydrates (like added sugar and white bread), the complex carbohydrates and fiber in beans keep you fuller longer and help stabilize your blood sugar and insulin levels. Stable blood sugar means you may be less hungry between meals — and less likely to reach for high-calorie, nutrient-poor snacks.
- **Contain disease-fighting antioxidants**
 - The flavonoids, tannins, phenolic compounds and other antioxidants in beans reduce inflammation and lower your risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and Type 2 diabetes.
- **Lower in total fat, saturated fat, and calories than animal proteins**, which contributes to a healthy weight and healthy body.

2. Easy on Your Wallet

Whether you use beans to add protein to a meal or as the main event, they are a cost-effective, saturated fat-free choice when compared to animal-based proteins.

Plus, canned legumes are convenient – they stay good in the pantry for 2 to 5 years. The dried variety last about a year on the shelf.



Photo by [stephanie monfette/Unsplash](#)



Food	Calories	Total/Saturated Fat	Protein	Cost per serving
Canned beans (1/2 c.)	110	1g/0g	7g	\$0.29
Chicken breast (4 oz.)	130	2g/0.5g	25g	\$1.25
Pork chop (4 oz.)	190	10g/3.5g	23g	\$1.25
Ground beef (4 oz.)	340	30g/11g	17g	\$1.50

How much protein do you really need?: The human body can't store excess protein, which means any amount you eat beyond what you need gets used for energy or stored as fat. The average person needs 0.36g of protein per lb. of body weight (about 55g, if you weigh 150lb).

Considering the average portion size of meat is likely twice the amount shown above, replacing meat with beans for one meal a day may be a health-smart option.

Budget-friendly food idea: Slash your grocery bill by swapping in canned beans for meat in traditional meat dishes...

- [Chickpeas as chicken salad](#)
- [Lentils as sloppy joes](#)
- [Black beans in crispy tacos](#)
- [Roasted chickpeas as bacon bits](#)
- [Bean chili](#)
- [White bean and mushroom as meatballs](#)
- [Black beans as burgers](#)



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3. Good for the Planet

In terms of sustainability, bean crops:

- Require dramatically less water to grow than animal protein sources and help the soil in which its grown to retain water
- Improve soil health and biodiversity by returning nutrients to the soil
- Don't need nitrogen fertilizer (a major greenhouse gas contributor) because they can grab nitrogen directly from the air and convert it into nutrients for growth
- Rarely contribute to food waste due to their long shelf life

4. Wait, Did I Mention They're Also Delicious?

Versatile, healthy, and super tasty, beans are a staple food in many different cultures — from the American South to Mexico and the Mediterranean. One reason: It's easy to make them taste good! Adding beans boosts the protein and fiber content of any meal.

Cooking Ideas: Not sure how to feature your favorite bean in a meal? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Red kidney beans:** beef chili, vegetarian curries, cold bean salad
- **Cannellini/Great Northern beans:** soups (minestrone or simmered with sausage and greens, mmm), white chicken chili, pasta with tomatoes and garlic, vegetable skillet
- **Chickpeas/Garbanzo beans:** stirred into rice, chicken soup, green salads, pastas, stews, Indian masala and dal, fritters, falafel, hummus, wraps, you name it!
- **Black beans:** chili, taco salad, refried beans, nachos, veggie burgers, soup, corn salad, salsa, bean dip, enchiladas, brownies (I said it!), stuffed peppers, breakfast burritos
- **Pinto beans:** refried beans, chili, cowboy caviar, baked beans, charro beans
- **Lentils:** soup, Indian dal and curry, sloppy joes, warm and cold salads

Nutrition Tip: If you can't find low-sodium canned beans, buy the full-salt option and thoroughly drain and rinse the beans. This extra step removes 40% of the sodium listed on the nutrition label.

My Current Favorite Canned Bean Recipe

Chickpea and Spinach Cheese Toasts

Makes 4 toasts

- 4 (1-inch-thick) slices crusty bread
- 4 slices Cheddar cheese, or favorite cheese
- Extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon red chili flake, or to taste
- 1 medium shallot, minced
- 1 (15-oz) can chickpeas, drained
- 1 (5-oz) package fresh baby spinach
- Shredded purple cabbage
- Lemon
- Salt and pepper, to taste



1. Drizzle bread slices with olive oil and season lightly with salt and pepper. Top each piece of bread with cheese and toast in pan, oven, or toaster oven until cheese is melted.
2. Heat large pan over medium-low and add 1 tablespoon olive oil. Add red chili flake and shallot and sauté until shallot is soft and starting to turn golden (about 5 min). Add chickpeas to pan and stir until heated through (about 3 min). Add spinach to pan and sauté until spinach is just wilted (about 4 min).
3. Turn off the heat and stir in a couple handfuls of purple cabbage, salt and pepper, and squeeze lemon juice to taste.
4. To serve: Top cheese toasts with a glorious heap of the chickpea mixture. Enjoy!