

Veggie of the Month

- June -

Peas and Beans



About

Peas and beans have long been a **major source of protein** for people all around the world, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. They belong to a plant family known as legumes, which also include crops like lentils and peanuts. Peas and beans are a staple in many cuisines and can be prepared a number of ways, and must be prepared correctly to eliminate natural toxins contained in the dry seeds or “pulses,” as they are individually called. To get the protein many others find in meat, vegetarians favor peas and beans in their diets, particularly soybeans, black beans and chickpeas--but you don't have to be a vegetarian to enjoy the nutrient-rich plants.

Did You Know?

Legumes are important agriculturally because their roots contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria, which help put nitrogen back into the soil for future plants to use.

India is the world's largest producer and the largest consumer of **pulses**, or individual legume seeds.



Shopper's Tips



Dried beans and legumes, with the exceptions of black-eyed peas and lentils, **require soaking in room-temperature water**, a step that rehydrates them for more even cooking. Before soaking, pick through the beans, discarding any discolored or shriveled ones or any foreign matter.

Canned legumes make quick additions to dishes that don't require long simmering. Just be sure to rinse prepared and canned legumes to remove some of the sodium added during processing.

Nutrition Highlights

- Legumes are a significant source of protein, dietary fiber, carbohydrates and dietary minerals.
- Beans specifically are **high in dietary fiber**, but some also contain harmful tasteless toxins that must be removed by cooking at a high temperature or fermenting, as well as antinutrients like phytic acid. As a result, beans should be eaten in moderation.

Try This!

- Add white beans to Italian recipes with pasta or red sauce for an extra bit of protein in your favorites.
- Add lime, cilantro and a bit of avocado oil to black beans. Use in burritos, fajitas, rice bowls or solo as a side dish!
- Incorporate beans, lentils or split peas into soup for a warm and nutritious meal.
- Turn traditional green peas into something special with shredded salty prosciutto.
- Use mixed beans in vegetarian chili.



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