



How to COOK^{dry} pinto beans



Cooking dry pinto beans is easy.

Sorting, soaking, cooking, and seasoning make this southwestern, mexican food a delight.

Pinto beans have been used in Mexico for a long, long time and now are also popular in the United States. The Southwestern United States is especially fond of pinto beans, using them in many popular dishes including chili, tostadas, burritos, dips, and soups. The taste of pinto beans is only appealing when prepared and seasoned correctly. Turning dry pinto beans into moist, tender, delicious pinto beans is not hard. A few simple techniques will help you.

Starting the process of delicious pinto beans begins with sorting. The reason for sorting is mainly to make sure the beans are free from rocks. Many people also like to pick out the beans that are darker or odd shaped although those beans will not hurt you. To begin sorting, pour a few cups of beans onto a table. Sit at the table in front of the beans with a pan or bowl large in your lap that is large enough to fit all of the beans that are on the table. Scoot beans from the edge of the table to the pan or bowl, removing any rocks or anything else that you see that needs to be removed. Children love to sort beans. It is fun.

After sorting the beans, place them in a colander and wash under running water under the faucet in the kitchen sink for a minute or so. It's best to hold with one hand and move the beans around with the other to make sure that they are clean. Washing them under running water will assure that all dirt has been rinsed from them.

Once beans are sorted and washed, it's time to begin the cooking process. It is very important to note that beans expand at least double when cooked with liquid. Make sure that you use a pan that has plenty of room for this expansion. There is a fast method and a slower method for cooking pinto beans. The fast method takes about four hours. The slower method takes overnight for soaking and about four hours for cooking.

The fast method is to put the pinto beans in a pan. Cover with water at least three inches above the beans. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover with lid, and simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the beans sit for one hour with the lid on. The beans will then be plump and ready to cook. Remove the lid after the hour and pour out water. You can put the beans in a colander again if you prefer. Refill beans in pan with clean tap water, covering beans at least one inch above the beans. Bring beans to boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Simmer beans with lid on for about four hours, checking every hour to make sure beans continue to have enough water.

The slower method involves covering the pan of beans with water at least three inches above the beans. Soak overnight. The next morning the beans will be plump and ready to cook. Pour out the water and fill with clean tap water, covering beans at least one inch above the beans. Bring beans to boil. Reduce heat and simmer with lid on for about four hours, checking every hour to make sure beans continue to have enough water.

If you have a slow cooker (commonly called a crock-pot), you can cook the pinto beans all day on low. Just make sure that the water level is filled as high as it can be so it won't go dry.

Some beans cook faster depending on how old they are. Beans are done when tender when poked with a fork or by tasting. If the beans run out of water while cooking, they will be dry and have a burnt taste. It is important for them to always have plenty of water.

Seasoning beans vary with personal preference. Do not add salt until after the beans are cooked. Adding salt before cooking will make the beans less tender. Adding chopped onion or fresh garlic while cooking makes very flavorful beans. Salt and seasonings to taste can be added after a few hours of cooking. Simmer for a short time after adding seasonings.

Pinto beans need to be used within a few days in the refrigerator. They can be frozen to use at a later date. Freeze the juice too as they will dry out. Pinto beans can also be mashed easily with a potato masher or an electric mixer. Start by using little juice and then add juice as desired. Fresh water can be used if you don't end up with enough juice. Frying hamburger and using chili-seasoning mix make great chili beans. Get creative. Once cooked, pinto beans have many uses in casseroles, dips and Mexican style food. Easy and affordable, not to mention easy to cook, pinto beans are a delight.