

# How to Cook Pinto Beans

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Pinto beans have long been a staple part of the Mexican diet. They are attractive looking beans, beige colored and speckled with brown that changes to a dusky pink on cooking. "Pinto" means "speckled" in Spanish, in recognition of this lovely coloring on the beans. They also have a very satisfying savory flavor that goes well with a variety of dishes. Cooking them is simple.

## Ingredients

- Pinto beans

Method  
1

### Cooking pinto beans from scratch

- 1 Wash the pinto beans.** Place in a colander and wash under a running tap.
  - Remove any obvious debris, such as small stones or twigs.
  - Remove any beans that don't look up to standard.
- 2 Soak.** Pre-soaking the beans helps to break down the oligosaccharides that contribute to increased flatulence.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Either slow or quick soak the pinto beans:
  - Quick soak: Place the pinto beans into a saucepan. Fill with 2-3 cups of water per 1 cup dried beans. Bring to the boil for 2 minutes. Remove from the heat, cover with the lid and let stand for 2 hours before cooking.
  - Slow soak: Add the beans to a saucepan and water, at a ratio of 2-3 cups water per 1 cup dried beans. Place the lid on the saucepan and put into the refrigerator to soak overnight (minimum 8 hours).
- 3 Drain.** Never cook beans in the water they've soaked in or you re-introduce the oligosaccharides that contribute to increased flatulence. Always drain the pre-soaked beans and use fresh water for cooking.
  - Equally important, never add seasonings or salt to the cooking beans. This can change the cooking time and can toughen the beans. Always add seasonings *after* the pinto beans have been cooked.
- 4 Ready the pinto beans for cooking.** Add either broth or water, at a ratio of 3 cups liquid to 1 cup dried beans. Add the beans, then pour over the water or broth. The liquid should cover the beans by 1-2 inches (2.5-5cm).
- 5 Bring to the boil.** Reduce to a gentle simmer. Cook for 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours. Check the water level frequently and top up if needed (always maintain the level of water above the beans). The beans may need an occasional stir with a wooden spoon.
  - The beans are ready when they're at a consistency suitable for mashing. Remove a bean and press it with a fork to see if it mashes well. If it does, the beans are ready.
  - Cooking time may vary depending on the size and age of the beans, the humidity and other unknowns. Generally, pinto beans require at least 1 1/2 hours and can even take up to 4 hours to fully cook.
- 6 Remove from the heat source.** Drain.
- 7 Use as required.**

**Method**  
**2**

### Cooking with canned pinto beans

- 1 Use straight from the can.** The beans are already cooked, so they don't need further cooking to soften them. However, the manner in which you prepare them matters to ensure a good taste.
- 2 Tip the canned pinto beans into a colander.** Rinse the beans under cold, running water to remove the brine or canned liquid. Once again, this is about removing the element that increases flatulence, as well as improving flavor.
- 3 Use in the recipe as directed.** Once rinsed, the canned pinto beans are ready for use in any recipe or purée.

**Method**  
**3**

### Mashing or puréeing pinto beans

Many Mexican recipes require mashed or pureed pinto beans. This is easy to do and also allows you to pressure cook the pinto beans if needed.

- 1 Cook the beans or drain canned beans as above.** Alternatively, cook the pinto beans using a pressure cooker (in which case, it should only take a half hour); follow the bean instructions accompanying your pressure cooker.
- 2 Add a little liquid.** Some people use the cooking liquid, others use fresh water or broth, it's up to you. Add small amounts of liquid—you can always increase the water but it's hard to drain drowned mashed beans!
  - Some shredded cheese can improve the taste if you like cheese.
- 3 Use a masher to mash the beans.** Add salt and better to taste while mashing.
- 4 Use as required by the recipe.** Or, simply eat as a side dish or spread on your bread or tortilla.

**Method**  
**4**

### Using pinto beans


- 1 Make re-fried beans.**
  - Cook the beans or drain canned beans as above. Alternatively, cook the pinto using a pressure cooker (in which case, it should only take a half hour).
  - Add oil to a cast iron skillet or pan. Add chopped onions and fry.
  - Add a little bit of hot water, about 1/4 cup per cup of cooked beans.
  - Add the beans and allow to heat gently in the hot water.
  - Mash the beans. Let them cook until all liquid is absorbed.
  - Serve. Mashed pinto beans have many uses, from filling to spreads, to being a simple but tasty side dish. Follow your recipe's suggestions if including in a dish.
- 2 Make pinto bean soup.** Presoak 1 pound/450g of pinto beans as outlined above, then add fresh water to cover the beans by at least an inch or two (2.5-5cm).
  - Add 1 large chopped onion, 1 chopped clove of garlic, 1 seeded and chopped jalapeño, 1/2 teaspoon oregano, 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin, a dash of cayenne and freshly ground pepper to taste.
  - Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to low and pop on a lid. Cook for 2-3 hours, or until the beans are tender.
  - Stir at least every 1/2 hour and add more water if needed, to keep the beans always covered.
  - Add salt to taste just before serving. Garnish with chopped tomatoes, shredded cilantro and shredded cheese.
    - Note: This recipe is an exception to not adding seasonings when the beans cook. What matters is that the *salt* is **not** added until the very end of cooking.

**3 Use as a tasty dip.** Cut raw vegetables, such as celery and carrot sticks and add some dipping chips for a tasty snack.

**4 Add to stews.** If a stew calls for adding beans to it, use the pinto beans. Or, make a pinto bean stew from scratch.

## Community Q&A

### Are pinto beans good for a diabetic?


 Yes, as long as they are not fried. Pinto beans can help balance out your blood sugar levels while giving you slow-burning energy.

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### Is a slow cooker the same as a crock pot?


 Yes, Crock Pot is a brand name, a Crock Pot is a slow cooker.

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Contributor

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### Will pinto beans sour if you put them in refrigerator immediately after cooking?

 Any food steaming hot put into the fridge right away can accelerate how quickly it will perish. As a general rule, let hot food cool down to room temperature before storing in the fridge.

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## Tips

- Use pinto beans in recipes that call for kidney beans. Pinto beans are an ideal substitute for many recipes that suggest using kidney beans.
- If you are using a slow cooker, cook the pinto beans for 8 hours on low heat. There is no need to pre-soak.

## Sources and Citations

1. <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=89>
2. [http://www.cilr.uq.edu.au/UserImages/File/Cooking\\_G5.pdf](http://www.cilr.uq.edu.au/UserImages/File/Cooking_G5.pdf)
  - <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=89> – research souce

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