



## How To Cook Beans in the Slow Cooker

### How To Cook Beans in the Slow Cooker

#### What You Need

##### Ingredients

Any amount of dried beans (*other than lentils*; see [How to Cook Lentils](#))

2 teaspoons salt per pound of beans, divided

Aromatics, like a bay leaf, peeled garlic, minced onion, or dried herbs (optional)

Smoked meat, like ham hock or smoked turkey leg (optional)

##### Equipment

3 1/2-quart or smaller slow cooker, for 1 pound of beans or less

OR

5-quart or larger slow cooker for 2 pounds of beans or more

#### Instructions

1. **Soak the beans overnight (optional):** Rinse the beans under cool, running water and remove any shriveled or unappetizing-looking beans. Transfer them to a bowl and cover with several inches of clean water. Let sit overnight. Drain before cooking.

→ **Safety Note:** *If you are cooking kidney beans, boil them for 10 minutes before cooking. This neutralizes a toxin called phytohemagglutinin (say that 3 times fast) that can cause acute digestive distress.*

2. **Transfer the beans to the slow cooker:** If you haven't already done so, rinse and pick over the beans. Transfer the beans to a slow cooker.
3. **Add aromatics:** Place the aromatics on top of the beans.
4. **Cover with water:** Pour enough water over the beans to cover them by about 2 inches. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and stir to dissolve.

5. **Cook on low for 6 to 8 hours:** Cover the pot and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours. If this is your first time cooking beans or you're cooking an unfamiliar kind of bean, begin checking the beans after 5 hours and then every 30 minutes until they are cooked to your liking. Beans generally finish cooking in 6 to 8 hours. When the beans are soft but still a little more firm than you'd like, add the second teaspoon of salt and continue cooking until done.
6. **Cool and store:** Cool the beans and then store them in the fridge for a week or in the freezer for up to 3 months.

**Recipe Note:**

- For a quicker cooking time, or if your beans are older than a year, try soaking the beans overnight with a brine solution of 1 1/2 tablespoons of salt mixed into 8 cups of water.

*This post and technique have been updated — first published January 21, 2009.*

