



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Family Matters

Improving Health Together

February 2024 Newsletter

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The Magic of Family-Friendly Beans: A Recipe for Healthy Habits By Amber Webb, Family Consumer Sciences Specialist, Larimer County

Introduction

Are you considering adopting healthier habits in the new year? Learning how to cook and eat well on a budget can have a positive impact on the overall health of you and your family. Incorporating more beans into your diet is something you might consider! Beans are a nutrient-packed food that can be a staple in family meals. They are rich in fiber, protein, vitamins, and minerals. They can help promote a healthy body weight, support digestion, and provide sustained energy. Few foods are as budget-friendly and versatile as beans, making them an ideal choice for busy families.



Tips for Success

Meal Prep Made Easy – Although canned beans are great for convenience, dry beans are cheaper and go further. Cook a large batch of beans and freeze them in smaller portions for convenient use in future meals. Once cooked, cool and freeze them on sheet pans, then transfer to freezer containers to prevent clumping. They are ready to be added to soups, stews, salads and even smoothies for added texture and nutritional value.



Creative Cooking – Try replacing meat with beans in recipes such as tacos, burritos, or pasta dishes. You'll still be getting plenty of protein and added fiber to your meals. Experiment with different bean varieties, such as black beans, chickpeas, or cannellini beans. They each provide a different color, flavor, and texture to meals.



Healthy Snacking – Roasted chickpeas (sometimes called garbanzo beans) are a delicious and nutritious snack that kids will enjoy. They are a great replacement for chips when the salty crunchy craving hits. Try sprinkling in any spices that you enjoy creating your own special version.

[Roasted Chickpeas - Spend Smart Eat Smart \(iastate.edu\)](https://iastate.edu/roasted-chickpeas-spend-smart-eat-smart)

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Let's Talk

When introducing beans and healthy eating habits with children, it's important to be positive and show excitement. Encourage children to be curious about the different types of beans and involve them in meal preparation. Model healthy eating behaviors by showing them that you enjoy cooking and eating beans. When you involve your children in age-appropriate tasks in meal preparation, research shows that they are more likely to eat those meals. When cooking together, use it as a teaching moment to explain that beans are good for our bodies and bellies, help fill us up and that people all over the world eat a rainbow of beans every day.

Recipe for Health

Black Bean and Veggie Quesadillas

Serves 6

Ingredients

- ½ (15½-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 medium zucchini
- 1 bunch fresh spinach (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup corn, fresh, canned, or frozen
- 4 ounces low-fat cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 Tablespoon olive or canola oil
- ½ teaspoon salt and ground black pepper
- 6 (8-inch) whole wheat flour tortillas
- Non-stick cooking spray
- Optional Ingredients
 - 3 Tablespoons fresh parsley or cilantro



Instructions

1. Pull back hair. Wash hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.
2. In a colander, drain and rinse black beans.
3. Rinse zucchini. Cut into thin slices or shred with a grater.
4. Rinse and chop fresh spinach. If using fresh parsley or cilantro, rinse and chop now.
5. If using fresh corn, peel. Use a knife to cut corn kernels off the cob. If using canned corn, drain.
6. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Add zucchini, corn, and spinach. Cook until semi-soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat.
7. Add black beans to the veggie mixture. Stir to combine. Smash beans lightly with a fork. Add 1–2 teaspoons water to make a bean-and-veggie paste.
8. Season mixture with a pinch of salt and pepper. If using parsley or cilantro, add now. Transfer mixture to medium bowl.
9. Wipe out the skillet, return to low-to-medium heat and add two tortillas. Spread vegetable mixture evenly on half of each tortilla. Sprinkle shredded cheese over the mixture. Fold tortillas over. Press lightly with spatula to flatten. Cook about 4 minutes per side, or until both sides of tortilla are golden brown. Repeat until all quesadillas are cooked.
10. Cut each quesadilla into 2 wedges. Serve while hot.

Chef's Notes: Add your favorite veggies to the filling. In place of zucchini and spinach, use leftover cooked veggies like collards, squash, or bell peppers. Top with avocado, low-fat yogurt, or salsa. Sprinkle in seasonings for extra flavor if you have them, such as cumin, chili powder, garlic, or onion powder.

Source: <https://cookingmatters.org/recipes/black-bean-and-vegetable-quesadillas/>

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