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Beans and Rice – A Staple of Traditional Diets

Whether it's Hoppin' John or Red Beans and Rice, beans and rice have been a staple pairing for thousands of years throughout African and Latino history. In Central America the bean/rice team is sometimes called *matrimonio* ("the marriage"). And beans and rice are interchangeable with peas and rice in the English-speaking Caribbean because of frequent use of pigeon peas and other field peas there. Always referred to as "rice and peas" (in that order) in Jamaica, the combination makes up the country's unofficial national dish called "The Coat of Arms."

In dishes throughout the Caribbean and South America, beans and rice are often served separately on the plate. In Africa and in some regional dishes, the beans and rice are usually cooked together in the same pot. Try it both ways to add variety to your meals.

RICE

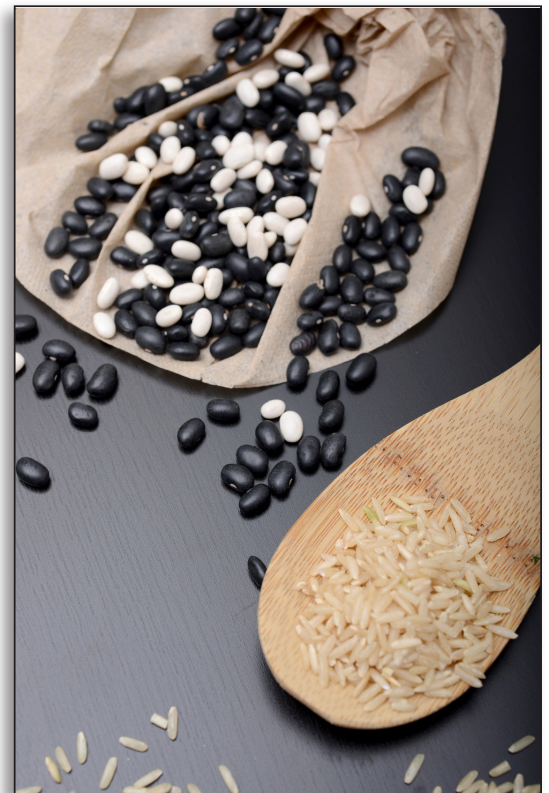
Rice is an essential element of almost every African and Latin American meal. It's usually used as an accompaniment to the other, more flavorful elements and is often served by itself or with beans. Spanish settlers and Africans brought over by the slave trade helped disseminate and popularize rice. In fact, rice is more popular in countries like Brazil and the Hispanic Caribbean, where there are heavier influences from Spanish and African populations. There are thousands of different types of rice and the preferred type depends on the country and dish. Dishes like *paella* are made with medium-grain rice, but long-grain rice is eaten on a more daily basis.

The rice of traditional African and Latin American cooking was whole-grain rice. Whole-grain brown rice is a healthier choice than white rice, as most of the nutrients in brown rice are stripped away when it is processed into white. Brown rice contains important minerals and vitamins that help our bodies stay strong and fiber that keeps us feeling fuller longer.

BEANS

Beans are a super plant food that provide protein, minerals, and fiber, but are low in fat with no cholesterol.

Since meat played a much smaller role in traditional diets, beans were a primary source of protein, energy and nutrition. In fact, most Latin American and African meals would not be complete without them!





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Different regions have their own favorite rice and bean pairings:

- In Brazil, black beans are most popular in beans-and-rice combinations, as well as in the Caribbean's famous black bean soup, *sopa de frijol negro*.
- Kidney beans, mung beans, and black-eyed peas (which are native to Africa) are most commonly enjoyed on the African continent. Black-eyed peas were carried over as a staple in African-American cuisine, and are popular even today.
- Red kidney beans are popular in Central America, and are very popular in Louisiana and Caribbean cuisines, often served with coconut milk and rice.
- Pigeon peas and other field peas are favorites of the Caribbean.
- Pinto and lima beans have their origins in Central and South America. They were used originally by the Aztecs and today are enjoyed in African heritage cuisine.
- Pinto beans are also the everyday bean of Mexico, used for *frijol refrito* (refried beans) and commonly served with rice.

Beans and rice are an affordable and healthy combination, and with over 13,000 varieties of beans to try, you'll always have something new and tasty to discover.

PREPARING BEANS BEFORE COOKING

Presoaking Beans

Dried beans should be soaked before cooking with either of these two easy methods. Soaking helps break down the compounds in beans that cause flatulence (gas) and helps speed up the cooking time while letting the beans cook more evenly.

Before using either presoaking method that follows, place beans in a colander, rinse and remove any stones or debris, drain and then proceed with directions.

Long-term Soak

Place beans in a pot. Cover beans with water and soak them for 6 to 8 hours (overnight or all day). When ready to cook, drain and rinse beans and proceed with your recipe.

Quick Soak

Place beans in a pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cook for 1 to 3 minutes, then remove the pot from the heat. Cover with a lid and let beans soak for one hour. Drain and rinse beans and then proceed with your recipe.

The following chart lists eleven popular beans to enjoy. Included are suggestions for Latin American and African heritage flavorings and recommendations on cooking times.



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Beans: Guide for Cooking Times and Flavor Profiles

One Cup Dried Beans	Cook Time	Latin American Flavor Profile	African Heritage Flavor Profile
Black Beans	60-90 min	Cumin, oregano, bay leaf	Cilantro, paprika
*Black-Eyed Peas (Cowpeas)	60 min	Scallions, cilantro	“Holy Trinity” (onion, pepper, celery)
Garbanzo (Chickpeas)	120 min	Onion, tomato, garlic	Dill, ginger, or curry powder
Fava (Broad)	60-90 min	Cilantro, lime juice, parsley	Allspice, parsley, garlic
Great Northern	90-120 min	Paprika, garlic, oregano	“Holy Trinity,” oregano, parsley
Kidney	60-90 min	Onion, jalapeño, garlic	Paprika, coriander, cloves
*Lentils (red, yellow, green)	60 min	Cumin, <i>aji amarillo</i>	Curry powder, ginger, allspice
Lima	60 min	Onion, jalapeño, lime	Parsley, oregano
Pigeon Peas (Congo Peas)	60 min	Allspice, cumin, coconut milk	Allspice, cilantro, cloves
Pinto	60 min	Jalapeño, ancho pepper, cilantro	Peppers, cinnamon, paprika
Red	60 min	Bell pepper, onion	Coconut milk, coriander, paprika

Beans marked with * do NOT require soaking beforehand.