What's So Great about Snap Beans?
Selecting and Storing Snap Beans
Varieties of Snap Beans
Fitting Snap Beans into MyPyramid
Recipe Collection
Grow Your Own Snap Beans
Activity Alley
What’s So Great about Snap Beans?

Green beans (also called snap or string beans) and yellow beans (also called wax or snap beans) are a moderate source of fiber, folate and beta-carotene. Snap beans also contain small amounts of calcium and vitamin C. Green and yellow beans are similar in taste, texture and nutrition.

Selecting and Storing Snap Beans

Green and wax beans are available in stores all year.

**Look for**
Bright colors. Green and yellow beans should be crisp, firm, and snap when broken.

**Avoid**
Beans that are wilted, flabby or that have brownish scars. Beans that have thick, tough pods are over-ripe.

**Storage**
Place beans in a plastic bag and place in the crisper of the refrigerator. Beans will stay fresh in the refrigerator for 5 days.

What is Beta-carotene?

Beta-carotene is an antioxidant and a part of the carotenoid vitamin family. Carotenoids are found in brightly colored fruits and vegetables. The brighter the color of a fruit or vegetable, the higher the beta-carotene content. Our bodies use beta-carotene to make vitamin A, a nutrient important for vision, immune function, and skin and bone health. Some studies show beta-carotene may reduce the risk of heart disease.
Varieties of Snap Beans

Snap beans are also referred to as “bush” or “pole” because the plants are either bushy or they grow up poles. Snap beans can be green, yellow (wax), round, or flat.

There are two basic types of snap beans: green-podded and yellow-podded (wax beans). Snap beans come in different shapes: long, short, flat, round, broad. There are more green bean varieties than yellow. Snap beans also come in purple podded varieties. The purple pods are flavorful, and turn green when cooked.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup Snap Beans</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Did you know?

Beans are often called “string” beans. Years ago a string ran along the seam of the bean. These strings were tough. And it was necessary to remove the string prior to cooking. Now, this is no longer needed. New varieties of beans do not have tough seams.

The “snapping” noise when breaking off the ends of the bean is the reason for its other nickname, snap bean.
Preparation Tips

Wash beans well. Cut off ends, cut into pieces, or leave whole before cooking. Beans can be cooked whole, cut crosswise or diagonally, or lengthwise (French-cut). For sweet tasting, crisp fresh beans, cut beans as little as possible. Cut older, more mature beans lengthwise for a more tender taste. Whatever cooking method, cook beans for as little time as possible. Use the least amount of water possible. If beans are cooked too long, nutrients may be lost.

Boiling
When boiling, do not cook beans too long or they will become mushy and lose their bright green color. Cooking time is 3 to 5 minutes. Beans may release some nutrients into the water, so try to re-use the bean water to regain some of the nutrients lost. For example, you can use the water to boil rice.

Microwaving
Place a pound of snap beans in a microwavable dish. Add 1/4 cup of water or broth. Cover and cook until tender, stirring mid-cooking time. Total cooking time is 5 to 10 minutes.

Stir-frying
Stir-frying is an easy way to prepare green beans. Stir-frying keeps more nutrients in the beans than other cooking methods. Cut beans into one-inch pieces. Stir-fry in vegetable oil or canola oil with other vegetables or with thin strips of meat. Cooking time is 2 to 5 minutes.

Steaming
Cook the beans in a small amount of boiling water in a tightly covered pot. Cooking time is about 3 to 5 minutes.

Freezing
Wash beans and trim ends. Blanch beans in boiling water for 4 minutes. Immediately cool in ice water. Drain and pack in freezer bags. Date

Fitting Snap Beans into MyPyramid

The GREEN triangle of MyPyramid is the vegetable section. Vegetables may be raw or cooked, fresh, frozen, or canned. Age, gender, and level of physical activity determine the daily vegetable need. For a 2000 calorie diet, it is recommended having about 2 1/2 cups of vegetables daily. For more information on vegetable serving sizes go to www.mypyramid.gov.

What does a cup of vegetables look like?
When on the go, it can be hard to know how much food is appropriate. There are some tools that can help. 1 cup of vegetables is about the size of a baseball, or the size of a fist.
Vegetable Salad
Makes 12 servings

INGREDIENTS
1 ¼ cup canned corn
1 ½ cup canned carrots
1 ¼ cup canned green beans
1 ¼ cup canned tomatoes
1 Tablespoon diced onion
1 Tablespoon diced green pepper
1/3 cup tomato juice from the canned tomatoes
1/4 cup vegetable oil
2 Tablespoons corn syrup
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS
2. Drain tomatoes. Save 1/3 cup of the liquid.
3. Mix corn, carrots, green beans, tomatoes, onion, and green pepper in a large bowl.
4. Mix together all other ingredients in a separate bowl.
5. Pour over vegetables.
6. Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours. Serve chilled.

Green Bean Sauté
Makes 6 servings

INGREDIENTS
1 cup diced onion
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1 teaspoon minced garlic
2 cups cut green beans
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1/8 teaspoon black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Spray a skillet with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Sauté onions, mushrooms, and garlic.
3. Add green beans. Cook until tender.

OPTIONS
Canned or frozen green beans can be used instead of fresh beans.

Nutrition Facts
½ cup Vegetable Salad

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Nutrition Facts
1 cup Sautéed Green Beans

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<td>Calcium 2%</td>
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Options
Use a 16-ounce bag of frozen vegetables in place of canned corn, carrots, and green beans. For a crunchier salad, fresh vegetables can be used in place of canned vegetables.
Beans grow best in sunlight. Beans do not survive in cold weather or frost. Plant beans in the spring after the last frost.

**Planting**
Plant seeds one inch deep. Plant seeds of bush beans 2 to 4 inches apart in rows at least 18 to 24 inches apart. Plant seeds of pole beans 4 to 6 inches apart in rows 30 to 36 inches apart.

**Watering**
Water the plants about once a week in dry weather. Do not let the soil get dry while the beans are blooming. If the blooms get wet, the blooms will drop. As a result, not as many beans will grow.

**Picking**
Pick beans before they become over-mature, tough and stringy. Beans are ready to pick when they are no thicker than a pencil. Pull beans to avoid damage to the plant. If beans are picked when they are ready, the plants will continue producing for several weeks.

For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service at (202) 274-7125.

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**ACTIVITY ALLEY**

How Much Do You Know About Snap Beans?

**Directions:** Match the bean-related word to the correct description

1. ___ Snap
2. ___ Pole
3. ___ Bush
4. ___ Betacarotene
5. ___ Wax
6. ___ Water

A. The variety of beans that require a stake to grow.
B. Our bodies use this to make Vitamin A. Beans are a good source of this nutrient.
C. ___ beans is another name for yellow beans.
D. The sound that beans make when they are broken. This is also the new name for beans since a string no longer grows along the seam of the pods.
E. Use very little of this when cooking with beans. It can pull the nutrients from the beans.
F. The variety of beans that is able to stand without support. This variety often produces more than other varieties.
**ACTIVITY ALLEY**

**How Much Do You Know About Snap Beans?**

**Directions:** Snap beans come in many colors: green, yellow and purple. Color these beans in your favorite color.

We snap beans get our name from the sound we make when you break our skinny pods!
References


Nutrition for Everyone: Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Center for Disease Control and Prevention: May 2008.


DC Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education. This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact the Income Maintenance Administration at 202-724-5506 to help identify how to get services.

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