



“Cooking up tortillas is so much fun when you got a bowl of beans.”

-[Michael Hurley](#), Slurf Song

Bean Box Goods
October 2023

We recently ended up in a bean bag limbo. Some big orders came in and our inventory dwindled to near-zero before expected and our bag vendor requires a rather long lead time.

Necessity being the mother of invention, we set out to find a more nimble DIY solution that would hopefully be less plastic-intensive and less-expensive to boot, if possible. We were able to accomplish both those things with these small paper bags and some self-inking stamps. We think they look pretty nifty and hope you like them.

There is a small risk that some of the little windows will bust in transit (please let us know if you run into any issues), but in our testing it was a rare bag in which a window would break. Let us know what you think on the interim ‘new’ packaging. We’re debating and exploring the implications of making it the new default for our Bean Box beans, if not for our retail line in grocery stores too.

Some folks will be well-aware of Serious Eats, for others it may be a new website. I’d describe it as a nerdy deep dive into the nuances of different recipes, cooking techniques, kitchen gadgets, and more. They’ve covered beans from a number of different angles over the years, including a recent exploration of dry brining beans, which honestly just seems like too big a waste of salt to rely on to me; but one day I will try it 😊 That said, I think editor Daniel Gritzer has done a good job of consolidating a lot of apropos questions and taking the time to concisely compile the nuances of soaking (or not), when to salt, cooking stovetop and in the oven. Here’s that worthy [primer](#).

They have a number of great deeper dives, including [this one](#) on salting I recommend checking out. For those of you who pre-soak your beans, you can find out how adding 1 tablespoon of salt per quart of soaking water can help the beans expand with less rupturing to their skins due to ion exchanges.

If you’ve found any great such resources (printed or digital) please feel free to share them with me at joe@vermontbeancrafters.com

In this Box

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Pinto Beans from Martens’ Farm, NY
Petite Crimson Lentils from Timeless, MT
Cayenne Beans from Morningstar Farm, VT
Pink Eye Peas from Marsh Hen Mill, SC
Dark Red Kidney Beans, Martens’ Farm, NY
Freckah/Grünkern, Martens Farm, NY

As a reminder, you can view our recommendations for cooking with beans on our website here <https://www.vermontbeancrafters.com/dry-beans>

Pinto Beans
Martens' Farm, NY



Hanna and Peter Martens are the generation following in the iconic footsteps of Mary Howell and Klaus Martens of Lakeview Organic Grains in Penn Yan NY. They grow an impressive variety of legumes and grains interspersed with cover crops and have a world-class seed cleaning operation that gets utilized by other farms in the region. Their family has been at the crest of the wave of organic grains and cover cropping for over thirty years. These are their pinto beans.

Pintos get their name from their speckled “painted” appearance that fades when cooked. They are many people’s go-to bean for refried beans, and righty so. They are great in that context and we’ve shared recipes for refritos before. This time around I’m hoping you’ll give Sopa Tarasca a try. Here is a link to a [recipe](#) for this traditional Michoacán soup. And here is a link to a [great video tutorial](#) from the wonderful series, “Asi se Cocina en el Rancho”

Petite Crimson Lentils
Timeless Foods, MT



I can’t say enough good things about the farmers of Timeless Foods. I’ve mentioned it in the past, but it’s worth repeating for newcomers: the Timeless growers are featured in the great book, [Lentil Underground](#), and have spent the last couple decades revolutionizing agriculture in parts of Montana that had been large monocrops of chemically-managed conventional wheat for much of the 20th century.

Lentils, though a different genus and species from common beans and are grown in distinct regions. Nonetheless, lentils are likewise nutritional powerhouses. They are 25% protein and offer up a meaningful amount of iron, folate, zinc and fiber. There is a full run-down of their nutritional benefits available [here](#) and a comparison of the nutritional profile of lentils relative to chickpeas [here](#).

Trying making [this hummus](#) with these crimson lentils in place of chickpeas for a bean spread that is comparatively higher in protein, iron, and B vitamins.

Cayenne Beans
Morningstar Farm, VT



These beans come from Seth and Jeanette Johnson of Morningstar Farm in Glover VT. They and their family grow an impressive array of organic beans, grains, sunflowers for oil, and hay in the beautiful Northeast Kingdom of Vermont.

Cayenne beans are a new bean offering as of 2019 that was bred at Michigan State University, like a good many newer bean varieties. It benefits growers by being higher-yielding, upright, shorter-season than other red bean varieties, and demonstrating resistant to common bean diseases. Cayenne is special through a culinary lens because it is among the reddest red beans and retains that color better than others when cooked and retains a clear brine, making it a nice option for soups where you don't want the beans to dominate.

[Here is a recipe](#) for one such soup I made subbing the Cayenne for white beans and combining them with the first sweet potatoes of the season up here. It's an Instant Pot recipe, but it works just as well in a slow cooker or in a long simmer on the stove in any old pot with a lid.

I also like taking these beans (honestly, any beans, really) and crushing them with a fork over some well-buttered toast with a squeeze of fresh lemon and pinch of salt in the morning for an avocado toast on a budget.

Pink Eye Peas
Marsh Hen Mill, SC



These are related to black eyed peas but are a [better-regarded](#) heirloom originating from western Africa. Generally a touch sweet and a touch less starchy than black eyed peas. Their color can vary a bit year to year with the weather of the season and with the soil of the farm where they were grown.

You could hang on to these (and the bag of Carolina Gold Rice that was in the last quarter's shipment) to make some Hoppin John for New Years as is tradition, or you could cook them and fold them into some braised greens with butter, garlic, and lemon juice. With the nights dipping into the 40's regularly up by us recently though, I've turned to soups with increasing regularity and these peas are just as good as black eyed peas in this [soup recipe](#) from J. Kenji Lopez-Alt. You can make it vegetarian by skipping the sausage and stirring in one tablespoon of miso per pint made.

I first became aware of Marsh Hen Mill when Greg Johnsman came up to Vermont for a Northern Grain Growers conference and led a tasting of *thirteen* different corns prepared as grits. It was a singular (and incredibly filling) experience. They are doing a great job of making less common varieties of Southern legumes and grains available.

Freekeh, or Grünkern Martens' Farm, Penn Yan NY



“Freekeh” comes from Arabic and means ‘to rub’ which is how farmers know when freekeh is ready, as it’s a mature still-green version of wheat that has a very narrow window to be harvested. If harvested too early, the seed head can still be in the ‘milk’ or ‘dough’ stage and not be any good. If harvested too late, it will be too hard and just be a mature wheat berry. In the lands comprising the former Ottoman Empire, this was commonly made with varieties of durum wheat (a descendent of emmer, and the second-most cultivated variety of wheat on the planet). Durum just means ‘hard’ in Latin. It is the hardest of the wheats in terms of resistance to milling. This is the wheat used for pastas. It’s not so good for bread baking.

What the folks at Seneca Grain and Bean sell as Freekeh they know is a similar but distinct offering as it’s made with spelt, which has been cultivated since 5,000 BCE! This is called Grünkern in Germany (and spelt is called “dinkel” wheat.

Spelt is similar to wheat, but another ancient grain that is a natural hybrid of emmer and goat grass. It can cross with wheat as well. It is considered to be healthier and even better-suited for gluten-intolerant people (though anyone with Celiac’ should likely avoid it). In all the regions where these grains were being harvested early and roasted, it was a good hedge against adverse weather later in the season ruining the harvest, and also enabled them to access the nutrients and calories of these fields earlier in the season when winter stores of the dried grain may be running thinner.

I really enjoy grain salads, and freekeh is good in any context a wheat berry or barley would be. You will need to boil it, but it’s flavor becomes more pronounced if you toast it in a bit of oil in a pan until it’s aromatic before adding your water on top, similar to how quinoa is often prepared.

Bon Appetit has a dozen wide-ranging recipes for freekeh, and this [tabouleh rendition](#) is particularly good. Here is another [grain salad recipe](#) from the region where freekeh (spelt) originated. You could also put it in any soup that you’re used to using barley in. There are many recipes available for a Lebanese soup that is centered around Freekeh as well, such as [this one](#) that has a good step-by-step for preparing the freekeh.

Dark Red Kidney Beans Martens' Farm, NY



The Martens’ Farm was introduced earlier in this booklet. These are their dark red kidney beans. They also grow a *light* red kidney bean that is a truly distinctive hue. There are hundreds of different varieties of kidney beans commercially available, each with their little particularities.

These are a great go-to in chili of course, but I don’t think you likely need one more chili recipe. Instead, I’ll suggest one of the large number of great kidney bean recipes available in Indian cuisine, where they are called “Rajma”. Here is one recipe for a [Rajma masala](#), and here is a truly charming video of a mother-son kitchen duet making Punjabi [Rajma Chawal](#) with the full recipe in the video’s description.