



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

-[Michael Hurley](#)

Bean Box Goods Winter 2023

Winter is here! Sorta...

Here in Vermont it's been pretty wiley weather-wise. A bit too much rain where snow should be, but on the whole it's still very much peak bean-eating season. We'll be summarizing the contents of this box, where they come from, why they matter, and how to prepare them in the pages that follow per usual. But it seems worthwhile to highlight a few books that we've regularly turned to over the years in exploring all of the different ways one can prepare beans. To wit:

[Bean By Bean](#), by Crescent Dragonwagon. This is a fairly exhaustive book, covering almost every variety of bean dish imaginable, and leaning vegetarian and vegan the whole time. The early part of the book offers a lot of nicely-illustrated insights into different bean cooking techniques and philosophies. It's worth having on your shelf as a bean geek.

[Cool Beans](#), by Joe Yonan. This is the book I would have liked to have written if I ever had the time, or the writing chops of this esteemed writer and editor. This book also leans vegetarian and does some geeky deep dives. If you still have that Sugar Kelp in your pantry from a couple bean boxes ago, Joe would likewise encourage you to put some in most every pot of beans

you cook. It's not about the flavor of the kelp itself, it's the umami it offers in addition to the way in which the sodium and potassium ions of the seaweed trade places with minerals in the beans to create a smoother, creamier consistency (with no need for soaking). There are plenty of atypical recipes, some beautiful photos, and a lot of great technical information as well.

[Grist](#) is a book that came out just in 2021 from chef Abra Berens who works at the imitable [Granor Farms](#) in Michigan. It's a thick book that has sections dedicated to common beans and other legumes, and also a voluminous section on cooking with a wide assortment of grains. It's a beautiful book full of thoughtful recipes, nicely organized, and beautifully photographed. There is a lot to learn between its covers.

There are of course many more books we could recommend, but this triad offers hundreds of recipes between them all, and I really do think they offer a bit more in terms of quality and diversity of ideas than many other cookbooks in this realm.

As a reminder we have recently switched over from Square to Stripe for billing and tracking orders. There are bound to be a few glitches as we make this transition, so please bear with us. We are confident that we will be able to provide better service while having an easier time managing the database side of all of this when all is said and done.

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or feedback at orders@vermontbeancrafters.com

In this Box

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Farro from Maine Grains, ME
Jacob's Cattle from Morningstar Farms, VT
Sea Island Red Peas from Marsh Hen Mill, SC
Green Lentils from Timeless Foods, MT
Black Beans from Schiltz Farms, NY
Chickpeas from Ramona Farms, AZ
Pumpkin Seeds from Stonyfield Farms, NY

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

Farro (*Triticum spelta*)
[Maine Grains, ME](#)



Maine Grains is doing truly incredible work. They converted a prison into a grain mill that provides, jobs, nourishment, and a community hub. Their bread and butter is milling organic wheat flour grown in rotation with legumes and potatoes from Maine farmers for bakers near and far, but they also curate a great selection of special grains like this one here in your box: farro.

Farro is an Italian word that is used as a catchall for emmer, einkorn, and spelt (all of which are the ancestors of modern wheat, with emmer being traced as far back as 17,000 years). While we are fans of whole grains generally, the farro you are getting is farro perlato, or 'pearled' farro, spelt in this case. It has been lightly processed to have some of its germ removed which goes a long way in enabling it to absorb flavors through cooking. This ancient grain offers 15 grams of protein per cup, 9 grams of fiber, and 30% of the recommended daily allowance of iron. All of these predecessors of modern wheat contain higher concentrations of lutein, which is important in eye health. It's consumption has been linked to mitigating risks of macular degeneration later on in life (spinach, peppers and radicchio are also great/even better sources of lutein).

Favorite ways to prepare farro include stews, pilafs and risotto. If you want a super simple preparation to get to know this grain better, you can just cook 1 cup of farro much like rice. Using a ratio of 2 cups water for every 1 cup of farro, bring your water to a boil, stir in your farro, reduce to low heat and cover. Simmer for 20-30 minutes until all of the water has been absorbed and the grains are tender.

For an entertaining walk-through of a truly delicious risotto-like preparation, this [Creamy Farro with Crispy Mushrooms](#) recipe by Alison Roman is the ticket.

Jacob's Cattle Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)
Morningstar Farm, VT



The mottled markings on these beans are always such a joyful thing to me. When presenting beans to elementary school classes these are the ones that get kids to stop and 'oooh' over the beans like they're pretty little gems, or maybe exotic bugs. There are many different strains of these beans, the ratio of the red splotches to the white are all over the map and the deepness of the red can be highly variable as well. These Jacob's Cattle are from Seth and Jeanette Johnson of Morningstar Farm in Glover VT. The markings on their beans are distinct from other growers we source from in the Northeast. I'm starting to think of the nuanced differences in the markings as the fingerprints of each farm.

There is also a blond version of these beans out there known as Golden Cattle which we will be offering in the future, and a nearly indistinguishable bean called Trout Bean which we will trial to see if they are in fact the same bean under different names. Living in a neck of the woods where the speckled bellies of trout bring thoughts of pristine snowmelt-fed rivers, I like the sound of Trout Bean.

Whatever you want to call them, they have been traced back at least as far as the 1700's and have very likely been cultivated in the Northeast for much longer than that. According to Fred Wiseman and others Jacob's Cattle, like Skunk Beans and True Red Vermont cranberry beans are Abenaki varieties, and their word for beans is "adebakwal". Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Band of Abenaki tells of how hunters wore skunk beans (which have beautiful black marbling atop a cream backdrop) as necklaces. If they didn't catch any game while out on a hunt, they could at least cook the beans from the necklace and make it home.

It's important to keep these beans with Northeastern roots alive and well in our gardens and in our pantries.

-Jacob's Cattle Continued-

There are only so many beans that grow well in our shorter cooler growing seasons, and these in particular are quite prolific for an heirloom, and are a great, versatile bean in the kitchen to-boot.

What follows is my default recipe for the pot of beans I cook off most Sundays to have beans ready to go during the work week. You could use this same treatment for pretty much any bean.

Simple One Pot Beans – 1 hour total time

Ingredients

1 lb dry Jacob's Cattle Beans
1 head of garlic, the cloves husked and crushed
1 small onion, peeled and diced
1 tablespoon salt

Directions

Pre-soak the beans or not, based on your preference. Put the beans and the rest of the ingredients in your cooking vessel and bring to a boil. After a rolling boil is reached, reduce to a simmer with the lid on but slightly ajar to keep the pot from boiling over. After about one hour of cooking, the beans should be tender enough that they can be crushed against the roof of your mouth with your tongue with no grittiness sensed.

After turning off the flame, I'll let the pot cool about 15-30 minutes for ease of handling. I'll ladle 1 qt of the pot into a plastic deli container to freeze, and keep another quart in the fridge to put on top of eggs, tacos, or polenta dishes throughout the work week when I'm getting home too late to cook off a pot of beans on a reasonable timeline for dinner. The quart in the freezer can be pulled out if we end up working through the 1st quart quickly, have guests over, or if I end up missing a subsequent Sunday bean pot cooking.

Sea Island Red Peas [Marsh Hen Mill, SC](#)



Beans are to corn what peas are to upland rice in the Carolina coast and sea islands. The seeds and knowledge of cultivating rice and peas was brought to the Carolinas with the expert agriculturalists amongst the West African communities whom were forcibly relocated to the early colonies in the 1600's and enslaved there. In particular, they are attributed to the Mende tribe of modern-day Sierra Leone in the region of Africa known as the Rice Coast. Over the course of 25 years, 50,000 humans were kidnapped and brought to Charlestown and the nearby Sea Islands. These people were the ancestors of the modern-day Gullah people.

Sea Island Red Peas are now considered an heirloom variety of peas, now in the Slow Food Ark of Taste due to their important role in [Gullah](#) cuisine. The Slow Food Ark of Taste is a program that catalogues and works to proliferate rare and endangered food crops of culinary and cultural significance around the globe. These peas informed early versions of what is now called Hoppin' John (made with dried peas and rice) and Reezy Peezy (made with fresh peas and rice) as far back as the 17th century in Carolina. Even dishes as iconic as rice and beans are thought to be adaptations of the West African dish [waakye](#), which, as an interesting aside, is cooked with limestone much like corn when preparing nixtamal for tortillas.

When simmered like you would normally cook a pot of beans, these peas make an incredibly rich, starchy stock (known in the south as 'gravy' or 'pot liquor') that has a unique color that is almost ochre. Their relatively thick skins allow them to maintain their integrity while still lending plenty of thickening and flavoring to dishes. You could blend them once cooked to make a satisfying take on refried beans, ladle them over grits, a bowl of rice, or some of the farro included in this Bean Box, which is what I did this past week. For some step-by-step recipes for these peas, [here is a simple preparation](#) from Marsh Hen Mill's own website.

Green Lentils (Lens Culinaris)
[Timeless Foods](#), MT



As featured in the [Lentil Underground](#), these lentils helped to put Timeless Foods on the map. These lentils are my go-to for dahl. They are good in any context that lentils are at home, and my other favorite way to eat them is simply paired with rice. Speaking of lentils and rice, here is a great short piece by [Dan of Cooks Illustrated](#) into the why rice and lentils are such a nutritious and delicious pairing. Hint: the essential amino acids of tryptophan and lysine are at play.

Though it calls for red lentils, your green lentils will work well in this recipe from Prema. [The video link is here](#). And the written recipe from the video follows:

INGREDIENTS:

Lentils - 1 cup
Turmeric - 1 tsp.
Water - 2 ½ cups
Olive oil - to drizzle
Ghee or butter – 2 tbsl.
Cumin seeds - 1 ½ tsp.
Onions - 1 small or ½ of 1 large chopped
Fresh Ginger- about 1 inch grated.
Green chilli pepper - to taste
Fresh Cilantro - a few leaves - rinsed

1. Wash and drain lentils twice - Add 2 ½ cups of water per 1 cup of lentils
2. Add turmeric
3. Drizzle oil on top – do not stir .
4. Cook over low to medium low heat uncovered. Stir occasionally.
5. Add 2 tbsl of ghee or butter to a fry pan and add cumin seeds when pan is hot. Stir until sizzled and aromatic.
6. Add fresh ginger, green chilli pepper and stir quickly in frying pan, then add onions and stir until slightly browned. Optional: you may add tomato or red pepper at this stage.
7. Lentils should appear homogenous at this stage. Add 1 ½ tsp. of salt and cilantro , reserving some for garnish.

Pepitas/Pumpkin Seeds (Cucurbita Pepo)
[Stony Brook Farm](#), NY



The **Pumpkin Seeds**, or pepitas, included in this Bean Box are from [Wholehearted Foods in Central NY](#). Their website elaborates on their mission and process, working with NY growers to produce squash seeds and cold-pressed squash seed oils. All their products are incredible. I spent a few growing seasons trying to figure out how to produce pumpkin seeds at scale and those experiences instill a deep appreciation in me for the good work these folks are doing.

Pumpkin seeds are incredible. Just one ounce of pumpkin seeds contains just over 5 grams of protein, 5 of fiber, and 5 of healthy fats. These are in the context of 15 grams of carbohydrates making it an incredibly well-balanced food and source of energy. These seeds are an uncommonly good source of immune system-supporting zinc, containing 20% of your recommended daily value in just one ounce.

These pumpkin seeds are good to eat as is, but really come into their own with some toasting. You could toast them in the oven by laying them out on a sheet pan and popping them in at 250F until golden brown (which can take up to 45 minutes, depending on the oven). But I find it much quicker and satisfying to put a glug of a higher heat cooking oil in a six-inch pan and once the pan is hot putting in an ounce or two of the pumpkin seeds with a pinch of salt, stirring regularly. Once they begin to brown and becoming aromatic I turn off the heat and let them cool before adding on top of salads, combining into pilafs, or sprinkling on tacos.

**Black Beans (*Phaseolus Vulgaris*)
Schiltz Farm, NY**



I think of black beans as the gateway bean. While I almost didn't include them in this first shipment out of a concern for them being considered too 'common', they are a central part of my life, and they are worthy of sharing enthusiastically. There are hundreds of varieties of black beans. Some make richer stocks for cooks, some have better agronomic qualities for farmers. Some are prized for their fabric dyeing traits, creating an indigo-like hue.

The variety included here is a variety called Black Beard which farmer Peter Schiltz in Lawrenceville NY chose to grow due to its reputation as a higher-yielding resistant variety. We like it as it is among the black beans that create rich stocks (known as 'pot liquor') and maintains a satisfying texture somewhere between toothsome and creamy.

I grew up eating black beans on a regular basis. I had a particularly profound moment I still clearly recall when I had a simple bowl of canned black beans with Adobo prepared by my sister's roommate in college. She was from the Dominican Republic and the bowl of beans she made was the first time where I came to understand a bowl of beans as a wholly satisfying main course, versus a filling or a side. This recipe is one of many possible variations on Habichuelas Guisadas, or 'bean stew', a standard and timeless bowl of beans. There are innumerable variations. It is a flexible recipe. Take liberties based on your personal preferences and what's in your pantry. Here's the gist:

Habichuelas Guisadas Recipe – 1 hour, plus soaking

With 1 lb dry black beans this yields 8 large servings.

Ingredients

1 lb dry black beans (2 lbs cooked weight)
1.5 qts water (adding more as needed to cover beans)
1 tablespoon of high heat oil (sunflower, canola, etc)
1 small yellow onion
1 red bell pepper

4 peeled and crushed garlic cloves
1 tomato or else 1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon sea salt
1/2 tablespoon Sazon (*a spice blend containing coriander, cumin, annatto, and oregano; Loisa makes an organic blend in NYC and sells it online)
1 teaspoon of Mad River Botanicals oregano

Soak your 1 lb of black beans ahead of time in 1 quart of water in the pot you wish to cook them in. Once fully plumped and sunk to the bottom, you want to put a slightly ajar lid on top and bring them to a simmer for about an hour, making sure they stay under 1/2 inch of water all the while.

For a richer stock, you really want to cook the beans in the water within which they were soaked, and to retain the cooking liquid. You don't have to, but it will not be quite so good and unctuous if you don't.

While your beans are cooking you want to get a simple sofrito going. Fill a pan with your 1 tablespoon of oil and put the pan on medium-low heat.

Dice all of your vegetables and add them to the pan. Stir occasionally to keep them coated in oil and to keep them evenly cooked. Once the vegetables start 'sweating' and onions begin to become translucent add your garlic, tomato paste, and seasoning. Stir in and reduce heat to low. Let those vegetables and seasonings continue to meld on low while your beans finish cooking.

Once your beans are fully softened (you should be able to easily crush a bean with your tongue across the roof of your mouth without feeling any grittiness). Take a potato masher and gently crush the beans to release them from their skins and thicken the stew to a creamy thicker consistency. Stir in your sofrito and reduce the pot to low and let the flavors meld for at least ten minutes. Taste for salt. Serve with cilantro and minced raw onion on top.

This dish is even better reheated the next day. It thickens up further and the flavors develop and meld more.

Garbanzo Beans (*Cicer Arietinum*)
[Ramona Farms, AZ](#)



There are at least forty species and several wild varieties. Archaeological records date back 10,000 years in the lands currently called Turkey and Syria, and what was formerly Mesopotamia. New England is very unlike these climates, however out West they grow quite well.

We source our organic chickpeas, or 'Kalvash', from Ramona Farms which is owned and managed by the Buttons, an Akimel O'Odham family growing on their ancestral lands in what is now known as Arizona. This crop was originally brought to the area from the Mediterranean by a Spanish Jesuit Missionary in the 1700's and has been grown along other more traditional crops like tepary beans ever since. These are the same chickpeas we use in our falafel at Bean Crafters. There are none better in the States as far as we are concerned.

These of course are fantastic in hummus ("hummus" is the Arabic word for chickpeas, by the way), but there are countless good hummus recipes online. As such, we're going to offer you an equally simple and satisfying recipe from that neck of the woods: chana masala. 'Chana' means chickpeas, and 'masala' refers to the spice blend used to season them in this dish.

One of my closest friends grew up in India and through regular potlucks introduced me to a whole world of flavors and aromas I hadn't known before. Chana masala is about as easy as it gets, and the leftovers are really versatile. I put them in veggie wraps, reheat them with eggs in the morning a la shakshuka, or snack on them as is the next day as a cold bean salad.

Chana Masala – 1 hour, plus soaking time

With 1 lb dry chickpeas this yields 8 one-cup servings.

Ingredients

1 lb chickpeas (2 lbs cooked weight)
1.5 quarts of cooking water
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 yellow onion, diced
1 tomato, diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
½ of one inch of fresh ginger, minced
1 tablespoon of sea salt
2 teaspoons of garam masala
1 green jalapeño or equivalent pepper if you like heat
1 lemon's juice

Rinse and soak your chickpeas. Cover with water and bring to a boil. This is a great dish for trying to add a bit of baking soda to your beans as they cook. After the chickpeas have come to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low and add 1 teaspoon of that alkaline alchemy. Skim off any foam that forms after adding the baking soda. Cover the pot with a lid and get to work on your masala.

Caramelize your diced onion in the 1 T of olive oil. Once caramelized, add your tomato and ginger, then the salt and garam masala. If you want it spicy, mince and add your pepper now. The liquid from the tomato will soak up the spices and the pan's contents will begin to thicken. If you want to, you can cool the contents now and blend it for a smoother sauce.

Check on your chickpeas after about forty-five minutes. We want them to be soft, not chalky at all, but not totally falling apart. If they are ready, ladle a cup of the cooking liquid into the pan that contains your sauce. Stir them together to thin out the sauce and begin adding the chickpeas until you have included all of the chickpeas. Depending on how much water evaporated, or not, you may end up with extra cooking liquid.

Now that the chickpeas are in the pan steeped in that glorious masala sauce, squeeze the juice of one lemon over top of it all and bring the pan back to a simmer for 10 minutes to get it all to meld. Taste it at this point and add more salt and garam masala to taste, a pinch at a time if need be.

If I have a can of full fat coconut milk in the cabinet, I will finish this dish with a heaping tablespoon of the coconut cream congealed at the top of the can. That fatty creaminess really puts an exclamation point on it all. A dollop of whole milk yogurt does too. Serve over rice.