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**Bean Box Goods**  
**January 2025**

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“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a [bean] field. I’ll meet you there.

When the soul lies down amidst those plants  
the world is too full to talk about.”

-Rumi [edited]

Congratulations! You made it!

2025 is here and the start of a new year is reminding us right out of the gate what a poignant time we live in.

Amidst all the conflicts, fires, and disintegrating public discourse I am still seeing a counterbalancing deepening of neighborliness around me and a doubling down by many to be good ancestors to future generations. Whatever you’re going through these days, or aspiring for later this year, know that we’re wishing you and yours good health and heaps of joy along the way.

May these beans help gather people around your table, spark conversations, kindle memories, warm you and fuel you along your way. Whatever it means to be human, we’re all in this together.

And it’s worth noting, that as bean lovers, we really are in this together in more than just spirit. Nearly all cultures around the world have varieties of beans that play an integral role in their cuisine. In this one bean box there are beans from the Phaseolus genus which has roots throughout the lands currently called South

America, and Peru in particular. Navy beans and Jacob’s Cattle are members of this species.

There are also two offerings from the Vigna genus. Vigna unguiculata would be the Black Eyed Peas with roots in Western Africa. They are a subspecies of cowpeas, but also referred to by some as cowpeas. They get their Latin binomial 'unguiculata' which means small claw from the small stalks on their flower petals. Do an image search for their flowers; they’re beautiful! They remind me of tiny orchids. All bean blossoms are beautiful, really.

We have also included adzuki beans (小豆), which are 'Vigna Angularis' (from the Latin for 'square', due to their distinct shape), which are widely distributed throughout eastern Asia, and have been cultivated for over 10,000 years in Japan, where there are more than 300 different cultivars!

Lastly, we also have some lentils here, which are Lens Culinaris. Canada currently grows 1/3 of the world’s lentils, but they originated in the Fertile Crescent and are still a major crop and ingredient in cuisines all throughout North Africa, the Middle East and beyond. The oldest archeological record of them was found in Greece, dating back 11,000 years, but they have deep roots throughout what the lands making up contemporary Syria, Jordan, Iran, and Turkey too. stovetop and in the oven.

Here’s a repeat link to a worthy [primer on cooking with beans](#).

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

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

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In this Box

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Organic Jacobs Cattle, Morningstar Farm, VT  
Organic Navy Beans, Morningstar Farms, VT  
Organic Adzuki Beans, Ferris Organics, MI  
Black Eyed Peas, Marsh Hen Mill, SC  
Organic Black Beluga Lentils, Timeless Foods, MT  
Organic Freekah, Maine Grains, ME

## Organic Jacob's Cattle Beans (P. Vulgaris)



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Slow Food has a [nice write-up](#) on these beans I encourage folks to check out. 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 'ooh' 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 based on how much rain a field gets in a given year and other factors.

These Jacob's Cattle are from Seth and Jeanette Johnson of Morningstar Farm in Glover VT, perhaps the best bean growers in New England! The markings on their beans are distinct from other growers we source from in the Northeast. I have come to think of the nuanced differences in these markings as the fingerprints of each farm and season's vintage. These beans have been traced back at least as far as the 1700's and have very likely been cultivated in the Northeast for much much longer than that. The Abenaki word for beans is "[adebakwal](#)".

These are a great stew bean, and contribute savory flavor and starch to a broth. I enjoy eating these on crusty toast in the morning. I'll reheat a ladle-full with their broth in a little six-inch skillet while my bread is toasting, smear some butter or glug some olive oil on the toast while it's still hot and empty the skillet over the toast. My toddler likes it when we melt shredded cheddar on the simmering beans. I prefer it when that cooking liquid ends up on the toast, creating a range of crusty well-structure toast, and stock-sodden flavor-rich sections, mingling with melted butter or oil. I top with a dash of apple cider vinegar or a lemon wedge, coarse salt, and [gomasio](#).

## Organic Navy Beans (P. Vulgaris)



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Navy beans aren't commonly grown in the Northeast anymore, but a good amount get grown in the Midwest, primarily for canning. They likely get their current namesake from the fact that they are standard fare in the US Navy, being served in their mess halls since the 1800's. And while most of us would like to not think about the Senate, I think there is likely bi-partisan agreement on this [Senate Bean Soup](#) which has apparently been served daily on Capitol Hill for over 110 years. I sub one teaspoon each of smoked paprika, kombu and smoked salt when wanting to skip the ham.

These beans, like all beans, offer a low-glycemic source of carbs that is particularly well-suited for anyone with diabetes, but useful for anyone who wants a sustained, slow-release form of energy throughout their day. A food is considered low-glycemic if they fall below 55 of the index, which runs up to 100. Navy beans tend to fall in the 30-36 range, well into low-glycemic territory.

There has been research linking navy to improvements in metabolic disorders, lowering cholesterol, decreased risk of cardiovascular disease. There is [further research](#) connecting folate in one's diet with decreased risk for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia due to this B vitamin's positive impacts on homocysteine in the bloodstream.

Suffice to say there's a lot of health-oriented reasons to eat beans. But let's not forget they're also delicious. They are standard in the Boston version of baked beans, and great in any soup, like this [Pureed White Bean and Winter Squash soup](#) from Martha Rose Shulman. And, lest we forget, navy beans are the go-to bean for [bean pie!](#)

## Organic Adzuki Beans (*Vigna angularis*)



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Though commonly referred to as adzuki beans these are a member of the *vigna* genus, so more closely related to peas (*vigna* is derived from *vinea*, or vine in latin) which speaks to their tendency, like with other peas, to send out tendrils from their semi-bush habit and explains their pronounced hilum, or ‘eye’. These hail from Eastern Asia, and Japan in particular where there are hundreds of different cultivars.

We sourced these adzuki beans from [Ferris Organic Farm](#) in Eaton Rapids MI, a beautiful, diversified family farm that also happens to be the first certified organic bean and grain cleaning facility in the Midwest back in the 1970’s.

I love red bean miso with adzuki beans. I made some small batches, but the folks at Rhapsody Natural Foods and [South River Miso](#) do such a good job that I’m sticking with making miso just for fun. If you are near Central Vermont, a new small batch producer is making some here too under the brand [Umamiso](#).

There is a significant amount of content online about how to make your own miso. If you would like to go this route, I recommend ordering some koji from [Rhapsody Natural Foods](#) in Cabot VT. They include miso recipes with every shipment. Just sub in adzuki beans 1:1 for soy beans. Here’s an additional [miso how-to video](#).

If you’re not up for miso, adzuki are also extremely popular throughout Eastern Asia as a [sweet red bean paste, known as anko](#). Here’s an [anko how-to video](#). There is also the Japanese dish Sekihan that combines adzuki beans with mochi rice for a distinct version of the reezy-peezy staple recipe of the Carolinas. Here is a recipe that also includes regional variations on [Sekihan](#).

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## Black Eyed Peas (*Vigna angularis*)



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Most everyone seems to know of Black Eyed Peas, but not too many people up here in the Northeast seem to have had the pleasure of eating them. Or if they have, they don’t constitute a regular part of their diet. No one is commercially growing them in the Northeast at present as they are more heat-loving bean being. There aren’t too many farm-direct sources we could find, but we were able to track down some B.E.P.s from Marsh Hen Mill, a diversified farm on Edisto Island that specializes in grains and peas.

As you may well know, they make for incredible eating, and are a staple in Southern cuisine. Preparing Hoppin’ John for New Years to bring good fortune is perhaps their most famous application.

Importantly, these are not another common bean (*P. Vulgaris*) with roots in South America. These are *V. unguiculata* and trace their roots to Western Africa. Their presence in southern cuisine is one more complicated legacy from the nefarious transatlantic movement of enslaved humans.

You could choose to hold on to these and make some Hoppin’ John for next New Years or belatedly court fortune and make it today! There are many versions of this recipe, some being as simple as 1 lb bacon + 1 pint peas + 1 pint rice. I’m not authority on southern cooking, but appreciated [the deep dive Serious Eats did on Hoppin John here](#). And for the visually-inclined, [here is a video how-to](#) recently put out by Georgia Cooking for Soul that gets you there too.

If you wanted a less well-trodden path for your peas, try this cowpea [ceviche](#) recipe from Global Bean. And while you’re on their website, consider subscribing to their newsletter and reading all the articles they have on beany happenings from all over the world.

### Black Beluga Lentils (*Lens Culinaris*)



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I can't hype up the farmers of Timeless Foods enough. They are featured in the [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 20<sup>th</sup> century. These Black Beluga lentils in particular helped to put Timeless Foods on the map.

When cooked, they hold their color and their shape extremely well, glistening like caviar. They're good in any context that lentils are at home, but they hold their shape better than brown, puy, and red lentils, so you might as well save them for recipes where you can show them off, even if just lightly salted and served over the Freekah included in this Box.

Once they have reached their creamy, starchy perfection, spoon onto bowls of rice or atop some pita, crusty bread, or crunchy romaine leaves. Adorn with a glug of olive oil, fresh lime juice and cilantro (or flat-leaf parsley if you don't do cilantro).

It's very worth your while to add [raita](#) to your repertoire if it's not already. It's simple, refreshing, and adds a vibrant, tangy, fatty layer to any meal. One part rice, one part lentils, one part raita make a meal worth having on a regular basis.

I've shared this before, but 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.

And to wrap up, here's an easy to navigate deep dive into black lentils and how to cook them from [Our Salty Kitchen](#). They really do require a different treatment from other lentils.

### Freekeh, or Grünkern (*Triticum Spelta*)

\*this contains gluten\*



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“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 than in the season when winter stores of the dried grain may be running thinner.

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.