



“Black beans and soy beans are the cornerstones of longevity diets around the world.”

-[Dan Buettner](#), Blue Zones

Bean Box Goods April 2023

Spring has landed and it feels like the middle of July here. I don't think I've had the pleasure of a sunburn in mid-April before, but I'll take the balm of those sun rays and their Vitamin D after a long, joyful, exhausting winter of navigating life as a parent for the first time.

This is our 10th quarterly shipment of our Bean Boxes. I'd like to think we're getting the hang of things at this point. As a reminder we have recently switched over from Square to Stripe for billing and tracking orders fairly recently. There are bound to be a few glitches as we make this transition, so please bear with us. 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.

In 2022 we sent out a survey to customers ('thank you' to those that filled it out!) and one of the pieces of feedback we got more than once was that for some folks 6lbs of beans quarterly was too much. We listened and added a new "Little B" option that includes only 4lbs of bean each quarter for folks who are passionate about beans, but perhaps are more demure in their passions. We also got some mixed feedback on those little addition of spices and herbs we have been including. We took that to heart as well and will be no longer including them. Skipping this piece of the boxes

has also enabled us to not have to raise our Bean Box prices in the wake of other rising costs we've experienced. So I daresay that works out all around.

That said, eating 6lbs of beans over the course of 12 weeks amounts to one half-pound serving per week, which in many cases is just one or two meals per week. I think you have that in you. So I'm going to reiterate some great bean-centered cookbooks here in case you missed them last time. I have them summarized in the Winter Bean Box recipe booklet, but to save space am just linking to them here:

[Bean By Bean](#), by Crescent Dragonwagon

[Cool Beans](#), by Joe Yonan

[Grist](#) is a book that came out just in 2021 from chef Abra Berens who works at the imitable [Granor Farms](#)

I'd also like to recommend the [Blue Zone](#) cookbooks by Dan Buettner, based on research and reporting he did for National Geographic on communities around the world with the largest concentrations of residents living to 100 years of age or older. There's a lot to those stories, but beans and legumes generally are a part of that larger story.

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

In this Box

Abenaki Flint Corn Meal from Cloud Water Farm, VT
Yellow Eye Beans from Morningstar Farms, VT
Black Eyed Peas from Marsh Hen Mill, SC
Red Kidney Beans from Martens' Farm, NY
Soldier Beans from Green Thumb, ME
Cranberry Beans from Callan Farms, NY

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

Abenaki Calais Flint Cornmeal (Zea Mays)
Cloud Water Farm, VT



This cornmeal was grown and milled at Cloud Water Farm in Warren, VT where Bean Crafters is based. The variety is known as Abenaki Calais Flint Corn and has deep roots in this landscape that is the longstanding home of the Abenaki people.

We have partnered with Chief Stevens of the Nulhegan Band and their non-profit Abenaki Helping Abenaki to bring this cornmeal into being. The Tribe owns the stone-mill which is house in our commercial kitchen and we mill corn for them to realize some of their food security goals, while working towards food sovereignty. This shipment is a debut of sorts of a new product line we are exploring rolling out with them that would exist to bring nourishing traditional foods to the world while bringing revenue to the Abenaki Helping Abenaki.

Flint corn is a specific variety of corn, as is popping corn and dent corn. It's 'flint' namesake speaks to its higher concentration of hard versus soft starches in its endosperm. This flint corn yields predominately all yellow ears, with some all red ears, and makes for a golden-hued cornmeal flecked with red, rich in the phytonutrients carotenoids. If you are new to phytonutrients, beans are also a great source, and you can find a [nice primer on them here](#). Now, what to make with your cornmeal? How about this cornbread from Chief Stevens that pairs great with beans:

Chief Stevens Corn Meal Muffin Recipe

1 ½ Cup Corn Meal
½ Cup of Flour
1/3 Cup of Sugar
½ Tsp of Salt
4 Tsp of Baking Powder
1 large Egg
1 Cup of Buttermilk
¼ Cup of Oil (I use canola)
1/3 cup of Maple Syrup

Bake at 400 degrees for 17 minutes

Yellow Eye Beans (P. Vulgaris)
Morningstar Farm, VT



There are baked beans, and then there are bean-in-hole beans. While there is a lot of contention around what bean varieties make the best baked beans, there seems to be more agreement (though certainly not a consensus) around yellow eye beans being the classic choice for a Maine bean-in-hole supper. If you haven't heard of a bean-in-hole supper, we hope to have a video out later this winter of one. In the mean time [here is some background and recipes from Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association](#).

Previously we have offered a yellow eye bean that had been grown organically by Lovers Brook Farm in Maine. That bean looked to be a Keneary Yellow Eye Bean. This time around we are offering you what *looks to me* to be a Steuben Yellow Eye bean grown organically by Morningstar Farm in Vermont. Seth states he was originally told this line of bean seed he's been growing for years was Keneary though. So whose to say!?

What's in a name anyway? Some folks also end up calling these self-same beauties Dot-Eye Beans, Molasses-Face Beans, and still others Butterscotch Calypso. Whatever the name they all of course share common ancestors. What we refer to as the Keneary strain in particular came from bean breeders up in Nova Scotia making selections from old timey yellow eye beans. They developed the Keneary Yellow Eye bean over time, which boasts a larger eye (the dark coloring around its hilum), and for farmers' sake, a more uniform maturity. That's probably the most important distinction. You in turn could plant these beans and make your own variety in time, selecting from your earliest-maturing plants, variations in color patterns, or a more upright growing habit. Bean breeding need not be spectator sport.

Black Eyed Peas
[Marsh Hen Mill, SC](#)



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, with Hoppin' John being their perhaps 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 New Years. 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, I personally really enjoyed making acarajé, which I came across by way of Sandor Katz's *Art of Fermentation*. It is a fried fritter of sorts that is the foundation of many different meals in parts of Africa and Brazil in particular. I've seen its origins credited to the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. Many preparations and interpretations can be found online. I'd love to hear others' experiences with different acarajé recipes.

Soldier Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)
Green Thumb Farm, ME



Soldier beans are classic New England heirloom. There are a lot of subtle variations and every lot we get from different farms are slightly unique, some more stretched out and oblong, others closer to a sphere, but never quite as round and plump as Bumblebee Beans. The markings around their eye, or hilum are similar to Yellow Eye beans, but more reddish, and less tightly contained around the eye. They are supposed to get their name from the red blotches looking like old-time soldiers, but I think they are more of a Rorschach test. I can just as easily see an iris in bloom, a horseshoe crab, and an irate duck.

At any rate! These beans were sourced from Green Thumb Farm in southern Maine where they grow them in rotation with potatoes. They, like most folks, call them soldier beans, so that's what we're calling them.

These are a good, starchy white bean. The colored marks blanch out once cooked and are scarcely noticeable. These are a good choice for making white bean spreads, some contend they are the best choice for baked beans, I put them in pasta fagioli when I don't have cannellini on-hand.

I tend to cook a pot of beans Sundays and use those beans throughout the ensuing week. A favorite quick to come together meal I lean on often is taking a white bean like Soldiers, cooked until tender and then tossing them while still hot into a bowl with thinly sliced spinach, drizzling (or glugging) some olive oil on top just so all the beans get slightly coated while their heat gently wilts the greens. I ladle these with a slotted spoon onto crusty toast and sprinkle some coarse salt on top. You could add avocado or sun dried tomatoes, but the experience lacks nothing as is and is a great way to feel satiated any time of day without feeling weighed down.

Red Kidney Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)
Martens' Farm, NY



One of our key partners for more 'classic' beans like pintos and kidneys, with the occasional specialty offering like NY-grown Winter Lentils, the Martens a key mover and shaker in the Northeast Food Shed. Many farmers buy their cover crop seed and animal feed from Peter's parents at Lakeview Organic Grains, pioneers of larger-scale organic grains in New York who have been big on sharing their lessons learned along the way with the community.

Peter is at the helm of the next generation and has decided to focus more on food-grade beans and grains. They built a state-of-the-art facility a couple of years ago where they process all of their own grain and bean crops, while also opening up their line to custom process for other area growers at reasonable rates. It's all very inspiring. This Bean Box is one more way these beans get out into the world, and we do feel like the world is a slightly better place each time someone boils up a pot of beans from places like this, helping to support the sort of community-building and soil stewardship that these folks exemplify.

So, what to do with these particular kidney beans? How about a classic [One Pot Bean Supper](#)? This recipe makes good use of a simple trick for making a thicker consistency bean dish by blending a portion of the beans with their cooking water and then stirring that puree back into the pot. These are good on their own as a side, or a quick and satisfying meal if ladled over a bowl of rice or grits.

Cranberry or Borlotti Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)
Callan Farms, NY



These beans go by many names and come in a wide range of subtle color variations. Called both borlotti and cranberry interchangeably, they are not to be confused with what are referred to as True Red Vermont Cranberry, a pole bean variety with a beautiful crimson seed coat, and long culinary tradition amongst indigenous communities in the Northeast.

All of varieties of borlotti are good shelling beans when green and in the process of maturing to a dry bean, and they make an incredible, delicate, more thinly skinned bean that makes great starchy broths in stews and are *very* good as a refried bean. These borlotti have been grown by the Callan family in the Finger Lakes region of NY, a great bean growing region. The Callans are now in their third generation of commercial bean growing and they also offer bean cleaning to other farmers throughout the Northeast. To me, they are unsung heroes of the Northeast food shed.

Like the rest of *P. Vulgaris* (common beans...vulgaris just means "common" in Latin), these originated in the lands now referred to as South and Central America. Peru and Oaxaca in particular are centers of biodiversity. Through the dismal history of colonialism, the beans found their way to Europe and spent the last five-hundred years becoming a staple in the cuisine there, much like their kin: tomatoes, potatoes, and peppers. Borlotti, like cannellini beans, are now indispensable to Italian cuisine.

Growing up I fell in love with a pasta fagioli made at this spot where three generations of an Italian family all worked together making magic. It was a weekly stop for my family. My sister worked there for a time and they always had a huge pot simmering in the back room. That same broth may have been simmering for years for all I know. What follows is my best approximation of this touchstone soup, one we shared ten shipments ago, and see as worth sharing again here:

Pasta Fagioli Recipe – 1 hour, plus soaking

With 1 lb dry borlotti beans this yields 12 servings.

Ingredients

1 lb borlotti beans (2 lbs cooked weight)
1.5 quarts of cooking water (retain your cooking liquid)
1 cup olive oil
2 cups coarsely diced carrots
2 cups coarsely diced celery stalks
1 cup coarsely diced yellow onion
1 tablespoon tomato paste
½ lb ditalini pasta (a small cylindrical noodle)
8 cups (1 quart) vegetable broth
2 tablespoons sea salt (more to taste)
1 bulb of garlic, peeled and crushed
½ tablespoon rosemary
½ tablespoon Mad River Botanicals Oregano
1 teaspoon black pepper

Soak your beans ahead of time. Drain, top with fresh water and bring to a boil. Once brought to a boil, reduce heat to med-low and keep covered with a slightly ajar lid.

After you get your beans going, pour half of your olive oil, ½ cup, into your soup pot set to medium heat. Add all of your vegetables and cook for about 15 minutes, or until they are fork-tender. At that point, add in your tomato paste, stock, garlic, herbs and salt. Stir. Reduce to medium-low heat. Turn your attention to the beans.

Once your beans are fully-cooked, add your pasta to the main soup pot, stir and let them cook as you deal with the beans. Remove 1 cup of the beans from the bean pot with a slotted spoon, and blend with the 1 cup of the cooking liquid and that other ½ cup of olive oil you held back at the beginning. Blend and add to your main soup pot. Top your soup off with the bean's cooking liquid and the beans. If that is too much bean for your liking, hold some back for later. They're great crushed on top of crusty bread with some fresh squeezed lemon, salt, garlic and olive oil as antipasti.

Top with crushed red pepper, a drizzle of olive oil, and some fresh-grated pecorino romano cheese if you wish. I can't not eat this soup with hand-torn chunks of oven-warmed crusty Italian bread.
