

Molly Yeh Loves Cooking with Dried Beans—These Are Her Top Tips for Working Them Into Your Meals

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Plus, the host of Food Network's *Girl Meets Farm* shares her foolproof method for cooking dried beans.

By Bridget Shirvell
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Credit: Courtesy of Food Network

Warning: [Chatting with Molly Yeh](#) about dried beans may result in completely changing your dinner plans. The blogger-turned-author-turned-host of Food Network's *Girl Meets Farm* quickly had us dreaming of [vegetarian chili](#), [Tuscan white bean soup](#), and more bean-forward recipes when she spoke to [MarthaStewart.com](https://marthastewart.com) recently.

"They're the little black dress of food; they go well in any scenario," says Yeh, who recently became a spokesperson for the Northarvest Bean Growers Association's "[Beans for Life](#)" campaign.

[Related: Here's What Molly Yeh Learned from Martha](#)

Aren't Dried Beans Difficult to Cook?

To the uninitiated, [dried beans](#) can be intimidating. Yeh admits she wasn't sure how to deal with them until moving to Minnesota. More than one half of the United States' bean production comes from North Dakota and Minnesota, and it just so happens that Yeh's husband Nick Hagen grows navy beans on their farm near the Minnesota and North Dakota border.

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"When I saw the beans my husband grows and saw my mother-in-law preparing them, it seemed like a very complicated process, but now, it's second nature to me," said Yeh. She suggests thinking of dried beans in the same way you would think about prepping your meat dishes, but instead of taking [a roast](#) out of the freezer to [defrost the night before](#), you're simply soaking some beans overnight.

Why Not Just Use Canned Beans?

After all, those cans are so easy to reach for. Sure, you can (and we do) [make delicious food with canned beans](#), but using dried beans is more economical and lets you control the moisture content. That's super important when you're using beans to make things like [falafel](#), meatless meatballs, or [burgers](#). They also give you more control over the flavor of the bean dish you're making, and with so many of us working from home, there's plenty of opportunities to try dried beans. Plus, as Yeh says, it's basically impossible to screw up dried beans.

Molly's Method for Cooking Dried Beans

The night before you're planning to use beans, Yeh recommends covering them with a good couple inches of water then covering the bowl you're soaking them in and keeping them at room temperature. If you forget to soak them, [you can cook unsoaked beans](#); just be prepared to cook them longer—or skip the soaking and [use a pressure cooker or Instant Pot](#) (our favorite method).

Ways to Use Dried Beans

After you've drained and rinsed the beans play around with cooking them in stock, adding an onion, other vegetables, or herbs. A pot of beans is, says Yeh, "A great way to use up random scraps sitting in your fridge. It does take some time to cook them, but they make the house smell delicious." She also suggests cooking them with salty meats like bacon. "There are so many different directions you can take, you're not going to screw it up, taste while they're cooking like you would if you're making soup."

Yeh says her favorite current favorite way to serve dried beans is to sauté kale, add beans, and then top with biscuits to make a cobbler. That recipe is on recipe on the Beans for Life website. While Yeh loves beans for their flavor, versatility, and health benefits, she adds that there's another reason she likes them in the kitchen: Yeh says she loves cooking with her 19-month old, Bernie, "but I don't want her to be around anything dangerous such as raw meat so I love letting her mash the beans, they're really soft, easy for Bernie to eat, and we're getting our protein source."


The Health Benefits of Beans, a Reminder

Full of antioxidants, protein, fiber; and naturally fat-free, sodium-free, and cholesterol-free, research shows that regularly eating beans provides a variety of health and wellness benefits, including reducing the risk of and aiding in the management of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

What are you waiting for? Start some beans and let them be your canvas; they're adaptable to almost any recipe.

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