

# Habits for a Healthy Life

This series is created by Mercersburg Area Council for Wellness. Contact us at MAC4Wellness@gmail.com with your questions or comments and if you are interested in being involved with council activities.

## Beans in the Kitchen

By Marianne Herr-Paul, D.O.  
and Roger Herr-Paul

If you've never cooked beans from scratch before, you'll need these two ways for getting from dried legume to savory, scrumptious meal. This is true for the following legumes: navy, red kidney, chickpeas (garbanzo's), butter beans, black beans (turtle beans), fava beans, and soybeans.

1) **Standard method:** put one cup of beans (or whatever your recipe calls for) in a glass mixing bowl, covered with fresh cold water to soak for at least 6 hours, or overnight.

2) **Quick method:** bring 6 cups of fresh cold water to a boil. Toss one cup of beans into the water, bring back to a boil, then turn off heat and let rest for about a half hour. This method helps crack open the tough outer layer of beans and speeds up cooking time.

With either of these methods, total cooking time varies by type of bean or recipe, but usually allow 2-3 hours to get a well-cooked bean.

These legumes do not usually require pre-soaking - work them directly into your recipe: lentils, adzuki beans, peanuts, and split peas - although they may need 40 minutes or so to become tender.

The following are two of our family's favorite recipes cooked with beans.

### *Pasta e Fagioli*

#### (Beans and Pasta)

(Recipe was lifted and liberally altered from "The Vegetarian Epicure," by Anna Thomas). While this might look complicated the first time you read through and cook it, you'll discover it's actually pretty easy.

#### Ingredients:

1-1/2 cups dried red kidney beans  
sea salt (but you may use regular salt if needed; I prefer the unrefined sea salt variety because of its many trace minerals, so needed by our bodies)

2/3 cup olive oil

1-2 bay leaves

2-3 cloves garlic

3 carrots

2 stalks celery

1 large onion

3 tbs olive oil

1-2 cloves crushed garlic

1-1/2 tsp dried oregano leaves

½ (+) tsp dried basil

sea salt and fresh-ground black pepper

2 quarts canned whole tomatoes or 8 firm, ripe tomatoes, peeled & quartered

½-1 lb shell macaroni or veggie spirals (depending on how far you want to stretch this meal)

chopped fresh parsley  
grated Parmesan cheese

#### Directions:

We use 1-1/2 cups red kidney beans for a group of six to eight people. Started with either soaking method noted above, pour the beans into a kettle, without draining, and add 1-1/2 teaspoons sea salt, 2/3 cup olive oil, one or two large Italian bay leaves, and 2 or 3 peeled whole cloves of garlic.

Let this concoction simmer 2-3 hrs. When they are ready, drain them, and reserve the liquid, discarding the bay leaves, and stirring the cooked garlic cloves into the beans.

Meanwhile, scrape and dice 3 carrots, slice 2 stalks of celery, and chop one large onion. Sauté these veggies in a large skillet, adding 1-2 cloves crushed garlic, sea salt and fresh-ground black pepper, and these herbs: 1-1/2 tsp. dried oregano leaves, generous ½ tsp. dried basil.

After about a half hour, add one quart of whole canned tomatoes or 4 firm, ripe tomatoes, peeled and cut into large pieces. Cover and cook another 10-15 minutes.

Cook ½ pound shell macaroni or veggie spirals (our preferred) in boiling salted water until just barely tender. Combine the beans with the cooked veggies and pasta in a large kettle, and add 1-1/2 to 2 cups of the reserved bean liquid, and another quart of tomatoes, or four fresh tomatoes (peeled & quartered).

Cover and simmer another 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, and adding more sea salt and pepper if necessary. Turn the mixture out onto a large, attractive platter, and sprinkle chopped fresh parley over it. Serve steaming hot, and pass grated Parmesan cheese in a bowl for guests or family to add as they wish.

### Simple Lentil, Rice & Onion Dish

A basic recipe which can be altered any way you choose, but cooks up quickly, and eats VERY WELL as a leftover dish when you are busy. Great substitute for a meat meal, as is the

more complicated dish above.

#### Ingredients:

3 medium yellow onions, peeled (adjust the number of onions to your taste - the original recipe called for FIVE, but my family would never tolerate that much onion!!)

3 Tbsp olive oil

1 cup lentils

3-1/2 cups cold water

1 cup long-grain brown rice

2 tsps sea salt

#### Directions:

Dice two of the onions (or three if you love them). Heat a large heavy skillet and add 2 Tbsp of the olive oil and the diced onions. Sauté on medium low for about 30 minutes, stirring every 10 minutes, until quite brown ("caramelized"), deglaze skillet with 3 or 4 Tbsp. water, and set aside.

Put the lentils and water in a large covered pot. Bring to a boil, covered, then simmer for about 10 minutes.

Add the cooked onion to the lentils along with the rice and salt. Cover and simmer for 40 minutes, or until both rice and lentils are soft. Remove from heat and let stand for five minutes. Slice the remaining one (or two, if you love them) onions into rings. Heat the skillet again and sauté the rings in the remaining oil.

To serve, top the lentils with the sautéed onion rings.

#### Variations:

You can also add a dollop of plain unflavored yogurt to the top, a lovely contrasting experience to the stronger lentil, onion and rice flavors. In addition, you can add curry powder to the lentils as they cook, to create yet another variation, or chop up a couple of carrots or add broccoli flowerets to cook in with the lentils and rice as well. (If you add other veggies, you might want to sauté them with a little extra olive oil to the caramelized onions.)

Remember, substitute four legume meals for meat meals for the next 21 days.