

Lowly bean best cheap protein source

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What's the most economical source of protein? The dry bean. I started to write the lowly dry bean but it's really held in high esteem by lots of people.

One serving of meat or meat alternate is expected to give you about 20 grams of protein—so one way to compare the cost of protein is to look at the cost of 20 grams of protein from various types of meat, fish and meat alternates.

The following list shows the 1981 cost in cents of 20 grams of protein from 12 different foods: dry beans, 13; peanut butter, 34; beef liver, 26; American cheese, 51; eggs, 22; chicken, whole, 30; hamburger, 43; turkey, whole, 30; tuna, canned, 37; ocean perch, 56; beef rump roast, 54; pork chops, 77.

As you can see, dry beans are considerably less expensive than any of the other typical protein sources.

So, if you're thinking you need to cut back on costs but don't want to short your family on nutrition start fixing some dry beans. And while you're thinking dry beans, you might also include their close cousins, dry peas and lentils.

To make these economical foods as nutritious as possible, it's helpful to combine them with a small amount of meat, some kind of milk products, or eggs. This is an easy way to make them a complete protein. So, even serving beans with a little ham added or with a glass of milk or hunk of cheese is great.

Another way to make beans a complete protein is to serve them in the right combinations with other vegetable protein sources such as beans and cornbread, beans and whole wheat bread, or beans and rice.

Beans are cheapest if you start from scratch. It does take a little planning and a little time but is really very easy. Very little pot watching, too, so even if the cook works all day, beans can be on the menu with the help of a crockpot or a timed oven and a little extra planning.

You need to wash beans, peas or lentils first. The cheaper brands of the generic beans, especially, need to be washed and picked over for little rocks.

The first time I fixed them as a young bride, someone told me to look for stones—this really puzzled me until one time I came across a little rock. It was like a great revelation—the rocks are the same size as the beans and even with today's sophisticated packaging methods they can't always be screened out.

Dry beans and whole peas should be soaked before cooking to reduce the time needed to cook them. Split peas for soup and lentils can be cooked without soaking. If you want the split peas to hold their shape, you can soak them for a half-hour before cooking.

Always remember to allow for expansion of beans, peas and lentils when cooking. The regular method for cooking beans is to put 1 lb. dry beans in about 6 cups cold water. Let stand in a cool place overnight or several hours. A quick soak can be done by adding 1 lb. beans to 6 to 8 cups hot water, heat to a boil, boil 2 minutes, cover and set aside for one hour. Then cook as usual. You can either discard the soaking water or use it for cooking.

It helps to boil them gently until slightly tender and then flavor them with salt, onion, herbs and meat. If foaming is a problem, add a little oil or margarine. Salt or acid products like tomato sauce can toughen the skins if added too early.

Cooked beans can be refrigerated for a couple of days or frozen, so you can do a batch and store in meal size packages. You may need to add a little water when reheating.

The Oregon State University Extension Service office near you has a variety of brochures with specific food buying information and ideas for getting more for your food dollar.

These are delightful baked beans that bring raves from everyone.

1 or 2 hamhocks
1 cup catsup
2½ tablespoons vinegar
½ cup brown sugar (less if desired)
1 tablespoon worchestershire sauce
1½ teaspoons dry mustard

Soak beans overnight or with quick soak method. Drain into colander and rinse under cold water. Put in large pan. Add 3 cups water, and boil for about one-half hour. Then add onion, bay leaf, salt, pep-

per, ham hocks and chunks of ham. Bring back to a boil and simmer one hour or until beans are tender. More water may be added.

Remove ham bone and bay leaf. Drain beans reserving liquid. Combine catsup, vinegar, brown sugar, worchestershire sauce and mustard. Add to beans using enough reserved bean liquid to cover beans. Bake covered at 325° for 3 hours, adding liquid if necessary.

This is a simple combination that is attractive and is a complete protein. My family was skeptical when I first fixed them. Now they ask for them. You can use the canned beans for convenience, or soak and cook your own beans for economy.

RED BEANS AND RICE

½ cup chopped onion
½ cup chopped celery
1 clove garlic

2 tablespoons margarine or butter
2 cups cooked kidney beans or red beans
2 cups cooked rice
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon pepper

Cook onion, celery and garlic in fat until tender. Remove garlic. Add remaining ingredients. Simmer together for five minutes to blend flavors.

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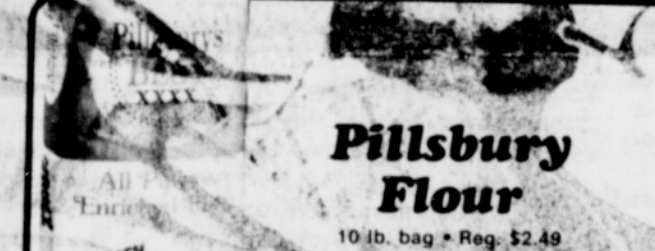
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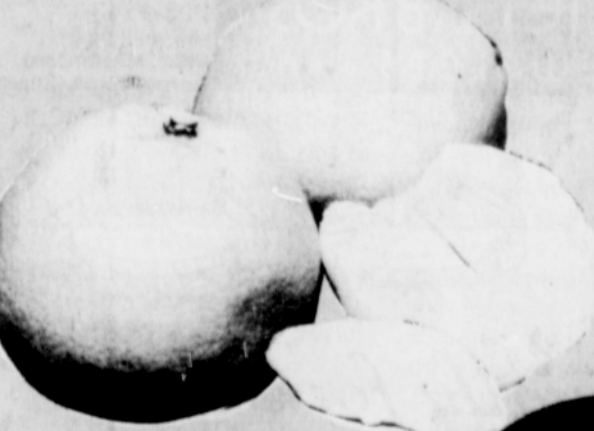
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