



**NOURISHING  
SINCE 2009**

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Bean Box Goods  
Spring 2022

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“Cut my pie into four pieces,  
I don’t think I could eat eight.”

-Yogi Berra

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

In this Box

Cayenne Beans from Morningstar Farm, VT  
Sea Island Red Peas from Marsh Hen Mill, SC  
Soldier Beans, Green Thumb Farm, ME  
White Tepary Beans from Ramona Farms, AZ  
Black Coco Beans from Cedar Circle Farm, VT  
Alpena Navy Beans from Mike Snow VT  
Fat Red Hominy from Lying Mohawk, SC

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For a PDF version of this booklet go to  
[vermontbeancrafters.com/bean-box](http://vermontbeancrafters.com/bean-box)

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With the hours of light stretching ever-longer on this side of the equinox the last of last year’s bean harvests are getting cleaned and bagged just as seed stock is getting sorted and ready to be planted.

As of last year there were only about 8 varieties of dry beans regularly commercially available in the Northeast, and perhaps two-dozen in the US, out of literally thousands of cultivars that indigenous seed stewards developed over the preceding millennia. We have since seen Winter Lentils, Rojo Chiquito, Cayenne, Black Coco, Tiger’s Eye, and King of the Early become more available. They still sell out early, but their acreage is increasing, and there are more varieties on the way.

This Bean Box subscription program is one of several forces helping to increase our region’s capacity to support the gradual broadening of genetic diversity of beans grown in our foodshed. [Here is an article from Civil Eats](#) on recent attempts by some other folks we work with trying to grow chickpeas in NY.

If you have a bean variety you would like to see included in a future Bean Box, bean seed to share, or would like to receive some bean seed to grow out yourself, please reach out to us. Email [beanbox@vermontbeancrafters.com](mailto:beanbox@vermontbeancrafters.com).

### Cayenne Beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*)



This is the first year Morningstar Farms in Glover VT have made Cayenne Beans available. Though rather larger, they are still technically considered in the 'small red bean' class of beans. They were bred by Michigan State University, where a lot of bean breeding takes place. From a grower's standpoint, these beans are more disease resistant and higher yielding than most other 'small red bean' varieties. From an eater's perspective they have great flavor, and a really impressive capacity to keep both their shape and their color after cooking. They made a really strong impression on me after cooking up my first pot of these.

Because these are such a new and distinct variety, I would recommend cooking these low and slow, all on their own save for a touch of salt, and giving yourself a chance to taste how rich of a stock these make, and feel how great the texture is.

After eating straight spoonfuls of these out of the pot, I ended up warming up some [Moon and Stars Arepas](#) on a griddle, melting some cheese on them, and then using a slotted spoon to put some cayenne beans and some dashes of hot sauce on them for a simple, quick, and wholly satisfying dinner. If you don't have ready access to arepas, they would be just as at home on some fresh tortillas, or nicely toasted, crusty bread.

### Sea Island Red Peas (*Vigna unguiculata*)



Like the golden rice that these peas grow with, these peas have their roots in Africa, where charred remains of these peas were found amongst millet and palm oil, dating back at least 4,000 years. These are one variety of the 30,000 varieties known to be in seed banks around the world, but one of particular importance to the cuisine of coastal Carolina and the Geechee culinary traditions there. They are in the [Slow Food Ark of Taste](#) due to their culinary significance and rarity.

For those interested, [Local Bounty](#) has a short, informative column on the history of sea island peas in the early days of Creole cooking, and an elaboration on Reezy Peezy, a classic pilaf-like preparation of green (not-yet-mature) sea island peas, versus the fully matured and dry ones you have before you.

For those interested in the longer, more in-depth version of this fraught story of these legumes, Slow Food has made public [this excerpt](#) from the book *Eating to Extinction*. It features these peas and illuminates how Cornelia Walker Bailey worked to help ensure you could hold them in your hands and cook them on your stove today.

If I were you, I would cook these peas down until they are practically a gravy and pour that elixir over cooked rice (ideally Carolina Gold Rice) stirring them all together. It's a singular experience eating slow-cooked peas and rice with minimal seasoning. If you want more going on, you could dress it up however you like your grits, or you could go in a distinct direction and try this [Sea Island Red Pea Soup with Corn Cakes](#) from Food on Fifth.

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## Soldier Beans (*P. vulgaris*)



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 is lightly stewed beans and greens on crusty toast. Another option is a variation on a Mediterranean salad like this, which I also find myself putting on top of crusty toast.

## Mediterranean Salad with Beans

### Ingredients

1 cup cooked Soldier Beans (or navy beans)  
1-2 cloves of garlic, the cloves husked and minced  
1 small red onion, peeled and diced small  
¼ Greek yogurt (or a whole milk yogurt)  
1 teaspoon salt (add more to taste)  
The juice of one lemon  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 cup chopped Romaine leaves  
1 cup diced Roma tomatoes  
1 cup diced cucumber  
½ cup crumbled feta (or more to taste)

Combine your garlic, onion, yogurt, salt, and lemon in a bowl. Stir in your cooked beans. In a separate bowl, combine your romaine, tomatoes, and cucumbers with your olive oil until they are all lightly coated. Fold in your seasoned beans, and top with the crumbled feta. Salting to taste at this point. Eat as is, or else spoon onto a well-toasted and buttered piece of bread. This concoction is also a good companion to a hefty smear of hummus in a flour tortilla for a nicely textured wrap.

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The Fat Red **Hominy** included in this Bean Box are from indigenous chef David Smoke McClusky who is doing great work in South Carolina under the [Corn Mafia](#) brand. You can find out more about their work and also purchase more hominy now that they *just* launched their online store [here](#).

The flavor of this hominy is incredible. If you don't particularly like smokey flavors though, I'd recommend soaking them overnight and tossing the soaking water. I put these in here hoping you would try them out in a pot of posole (sometimes spelled 'pozole' with your white tepary beans or the cayenne beans. Posole with this hominy sings. There are many good recipes for posole online. You could [give this one a try](#), subbing your beans in for the pork. Or keep the pork and also add in the beans.

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### White Tepary Beans (*P. Acutifolias*)



Here is a different variety of the tepary beans that [Ramona Farms](#) grow. Ramona Button is the Akimel O'Odham farmer behind Ramona Farms. As we mentioned in a previous shipment, the beans from *P. Acutifolias* come in at least forty-six distinct colors and each offers up other subtle distinctions in both texture and the broth they make.

#### White Bean Dip

##### *Ingredients*

1 lb dry White Tepary Beans (or navy beans)  
1 head of garlic, the cloves husked and crushed  
1 small yellow onion, peeled and diced  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon salt (add more to taste)  
1 teaspoon cumin, ground  
1 teaspoon paprika  
The juice of one lemon, and half of its zest.

Rinse the white tepary beans and add water to cover, plus a couple of inches extra water. Bring all ingredients to a rapid boil for 30 minutes. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer for at least two and up to six hours, until tender. Remember these are a completely different bean from *P. Vulgaris* beans like pintos and it's part of their natural character that they take longer to cook and will retain a firmer texture once cooked. If you have an InstantPot or pressure cooker, that can certainly save you some time here. After the beans have cooked through they will still be firm and 'meaty', but they should not be chalky any more. Drain off the excess water (but save it!) leaving just enough to barely cover the beans. That should be about the right amount to give you a smooth texture in your dip, but since the dip will thicken up a bit as it cools, you may want to blend in more of that saved bean broth before all is said and done. Add all of the rest of your ingredients to your pot or blender and blend until smooth. If you want a sharper allium flavor in your dip, blend in the garlic and onion raw versus sauteed.

### Black Coco Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)



These beans are a trip. Nearly twice as big as the more familiar black turtle bean when dry, their size discrepancies are even more exaggerated once cooked. They have a really pleasant texture and make for a bit of a dramatic presentation in any dish that leans on black beans.

These beans were grown by the team at [Cedar Circle Farm](#), an educational and community-focused farm in the Upper Valley of Vermont, right on the banks of the Connecticut River. They reported out that these were one of the more vigorous and better yielding varieties they have grown. They also provide a recipe to a summer salad showcasing these very beans [on their website, here](#).

When I was trying these out, I ended up plating them with the ever-present tortillas we have at our home. So,

#### Black Coco Bean and Squash Tacos

##### *Ingredients (for up to 8 tacos worth of filling)*

2 cups cooked Black Coco beans  
1 tablespoons refined sunflower oil  
1 teaspoon whole cumin  
1 jalapeño, de-stemmed, de-seeded, diced small  
1 teaspoon salt (add more to taste)  
1 bunch fresh cilantro  
1 small yellow onion, peeled and diced  
1 lime's juice

First step: [cook your beans](#), or begin warming up your precooked beans on a back burner. This recipe can be made with winter squash in the fall and winter, or with summer squash varieties in the warm months. You can also sub in sweet potatoes and prepare them just as you would winter squash. If I'm cooking a whole winter squash to be made into a puree I'll cut it lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, coat it in oil and bake it cut-side



down at 425 F until browned and fork tender (usually around 15-20 minutes depending on its size), remove from the oven, and once it's cooled enough to easily handle with bare hands, I'll pull the skin off and mash or blend it while it's still warm with the spices and salt. If I want diced winter squash, I'll pre-peel it while raw, then cut it in half lengthwise before scooping out the seeds and dicing it. I still cook the squash at 425 F (usually with refined sunflower oil as my high heat oil of choice), but the pre-diced pieces cook in half the time.

If using summer squash, simply dice with the skin still on, and cook on a skillet set to medium heat. Before adding the squash to the skillet, add your sunflower oil and your cumin bring up to temp. Once your cumin is aromatic and beginning to darken, add in your diced squash. Flip the squash pieces once they have a good even sear on them. After an initial flip, add your jalapeños. Turn off the stove and remove the skillet from heat once 2 side of the diced squash have a good sear.

I like making a simple taco topping by chopping fresh cilantro, finely diced raw onion, and the juice of one lime and tossing them all together to spoon on top of each taco. I add in scallion greens and/or chives when I have them available. If raw onion is too intense for you, you can mellow them by adding them to a mix of 1 cup water with 1 tablespoon baking soda for fifteen minutes. [Cooks Illustrated has a piece on that here.](#)

Take a [warmed up tortilla](#) and use a slotted spoon to portion a couple ounces of the cooked beans to them. Put equal parts cooked squash, and top with a tablespoon of your herb and allium topping.

I recommend warming up tortillas in stacks, as demonstrated in the video linked to above, and bringing them to the table wrapped in a clean dish cloth to stay warm and steamy. Then everyone can build their own tacos to their liking at the table. This is preferable to me than pre-assembling tacos as they too-quickly get cold that way, and saucier fillings can make tortillas soggy when pre-plated that way.

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### Alpena Navy Beans (*P. Vulgaris*)



These are another bean that was grown in the Upper Valley of VT, this time by Mike Snow, a person passionate about cover crops, beans, and grains. Mike had some issues with getting this past year's harvest dried down fast enough, so we didn't end up having as much inventory as we had planned on, and so some folks will be getting some of our seed stock from Central Bean in WA. It's the same bean from a different farm.

Navy beans aren't a super common bean in the Northeast, but a good amount of them get grown in the Midwest, primarily for canning. This variety of navy bean, Alpena, was bred from some of the then-best varieties of navy beans at Michigan State to be a shorter season bean, and to have a more upright growing habit and both white mold resistance and Common Mosaic Virus resistance. All of these attributes are perhaps boring to read, but are all impediments to more white beans being grown in the Northeast. Our often-soggy Autumns following our shorter growing season means a lot of white beans can droop in the field after autumnal rains and get discoloration from soil contact and mold pressure that reduces their marketability.

We are hoping to get a few more growers to get to try Alpena out over the next few years to get a more reliable supply of this great small white bean.

I tried my baked bean recipe with these beans and it made me question my prior claim to prefer marafax beans above all others for baked beans. Not wanting to fully recant that long-held view just yet, check out this [White bean and Kale Soup recipe](#) from a You Tube channel that has a lot of other good bean recipes and information for cooking with an Instantpot. The print version of this recipe can be found [here](#).

And, lest we forget, navy beans are the go-to bean for [bean pie!](#)