

Lesson 4: Beans & Rice (or Peas & Rice)

The lesson on Beans & Rice is very straightforward. The lesson discusses the cultural significance, powerful nutrition and affordability of beans & rice; the crucial role that African Americans played in the dawn of American rice cultivation; and, the health benefits of eating vegetarian meals—especially those with beans.

Oldways Tip #1: Share samples of (dried) African heritage beans.

If you have access to a food store with a bulk section, pick up a small sampling of any of the beans we include on the African Heritage Beans student sheet (dried kidney beans, fava beans, mung beans, pigeon peas, etc.). Pass them around the class, while walking through the African Heritage Beans sheet on pg. 101.

Oldways Tip #2: Key takeaway from the discussion on vegetarianism: You don't have to be a vegetarian to eat vegetarian meals. Adding vegetarian meals to one's week can increase nutrition, lower calories, and expand a family's dinner menu dramatically. Over a third of ATOAH graduates increase the number of vegetarian-meals they eat in a week, with nearly half (47%) eating more than 1 vegetarian meal per week upon graduation. ATOAH helps by giving students a list of new plant-based ingredients to work with and a different mindset about one's plate – a heritage plate.

Tips and Comments from Fellow Teachers

- Beans and rice proved to be everyone's favorite comfort food. We talked about substituting brown, black, and red rice for white rice. One participant brought in a Jamaican rice dish. We also discussed ways to prepare couscous and quinoa for breakfast.
- Our class shared stories about different beans we've eaten. I suggested cooking 2-3 beans at a time and freezing them to store and save cooking time, for easy meals.
- Red lentils were not available in our neighborhood, so we used brown lentils, which were just as good.
- When making the rice, I used the potlikker from the previous class (frozen) as the liquid, to infuse more nutrients. I also made the black-eyed pea salad ahead of time, that way the dressing had time to marinate.
- Traditionally, beans are eaten with cornbread. We took the extra coconut milk along with cornmeal used in my whole grains demonstration to make cornbread.
- Participants mentioned that their usual bean dishes were not as flavorful as these recipes. They described their recipes as having salt, pepper, and a piece of smoked meat that is boiled to mush. I made a Jamaican black bean, coconut, ginger brown rice dish and displayed a variety of beans and whole grain rice. I also provided a taste of different kinds of nuts.

Additional Recipe Ideas

[Oldways Accara](#) with [Kanni](#) sauce
[Red Red](#) (Black-eyed Pea Tomato Okra Stew)