



Edamame: How to Buy, Store, and Cook the Beloved Green Soybean

By Mary Margaret Chappell
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In Brief

- Edamame are young green soybeans prized for their nutty-sweet flavor and creamy texture.
- Pick bright green fresh pods or clump-free frozen bags.
- The pods are inedible. **Read on for the full guide.**

Mention edamame and most people's first thought is the whole, steamed pods that are so much fun to eat in Japanese restaurants. But ever since frozen bags of shelled edamame became common in North American grocery stores in the 1990s, the protein-rich green soybeans have become a beloved ingredient in recipes, especially among plant-based cooks, and rightfully so: The green soybeans are versatile, delicious, and nutritious. Here's everything you need to know to make the most of it, from salt-free seasoning ideas for whole pods to easy ways to add the shelled beans to everyday recipes.

What Is Edamame?

Edamame are young soybeans that are harvested in the summer and early autumn, while both the beans and their pods are still green and tender. The pods are fibrous and inedible, but the plump, petite beans have a

nutty, slightly sweet flavor and a creamy texture.

All soybeans are native to China, where edamame are called mao dou, or "furry peas," because of the fine hairs that grow on the pods. The Japanese term edamame, which we've adopted in English, means "stem beans," because the pods were generally sold while still attached to the plants' stems.

In both China and Japan, edamame remains a popular summer produce item that is primarily consumed as a snack or street food. "In Japan, edamame are mostly boiled, salted, and eaten straight from the pod at the beginning of a meal in restaurants or izakaya (pubs). They appear at your table seconds after you order them," explains Voltaire Cang, a Japanese cultural and foodhistorian based in Tokyo.

Is Edamame Healthy?

For a bar snack, edamame are incredibly good for you (provided they're not laced with too much salt). A half cup of shelled beans delivers 9 grams of protein and 4 grams of fiber, with fewer calories than the same serving of chickpeas or white beans. In recent studies, consuming whole soybean products like edamame has been linked to a [reduced risk of certain cancers](#) and [alleviation of certain menopausal symptoms](#), like [hot flashes](#).

Shopping and Storage

If you're lucky enough to find fresh edamame beans at a farmers market or Asian grocery, select pods that look full and bright green with no yellowing or brown spots. Store in a breathable bag in the fridge for up to three days, or blanch the whole pods for three minutes in boiling salted water and freeze whole or shelled in resealable storage bags.

When buying frozen edamame, give the bag a quick shake to make sure the beans have not frozen in clumps—a sign that the package may have partially thawed in transit.

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If you're watching your sodium, when buying frozen edamame, check the label carefully to be sure the pods or beans have not been salted. For GMO-free options, choose brands labeled organic and/or non-GMO.

Want to try roasted or crispy edamame as a snack? Look for labels that say the crunchy treats are [unsalted and dry-roasted](#).

How to Cook Edamame

You should always cook edamame before eating it, and you'll usually find cooking instructions right on the package, but here are some basics instructions.

For whole pods: Bring a pot of water to boiling. Add pods and cook 3 to 5 minutes until bright green and tender. Drain and serve. (Alternatively, steam 5 to 7 minutes.)

For shelled pods: Bring a pot of water to boiling. Add beans and cook 3 to 4 minutes or until tender. Drain and serve. (Or steam 5 minutes.)

How to Eat Edamame

Edamame can be eaten in two main ways.

Snacking on whole pods: Hold a pod by the end, squeeze at the base, and pop the beans into your mouth. (The pod itself is super fibrous and not edible.)

Using shelled beans in recipes: Add them to salads, grain bowls, stir-fries, or dips. They can also be mashed for spreads. See [How to Use Shelled Edamame](#) (below) for more ideas.

Salt-Free Seasoning Ideas

Salt is the classic seasoning for whole edamame pods served as a snack, but there are plenty of low-sodium ways to add flavor and keep things healthy. Here are a few to toss the pods with while they're warm and can absorb the flavors.

- Any seasoning blend from curry powder to za'atar (we love [Dash Everything But the Salt](#))
- Nutritional yeast
- Cracked black pepper
- Chili flakes or chili powder (start slow, then

season to taste)

- Splash of prepared vinaigrette or salad dressing
- Dash of hot sauce
- Lemon or lime juice and minced garlic

How to Use Shelled Edamame

Today in the U.S., you're more likely to find shelled edamame in [a salad](#) or [grain bowl](#) than whole pods served as a snack. These main dishes are actually in keeping with other ways edamame are used in East Asia. "In Japan, edamame is sold fresh in the summer, but you can buy them frozen any time of year," says Cang. "It's added to rice, salads, and stir-fries to give them color and a summery vibe. It's also used in chili recipes in place of kidney beans. Edamame are also mashed with sugar to make zunda, a dessert filling or topping for mochi."

One of Cang's favorite ways to use edamame is to make a version of takikomi gohan, a mixed rice dish with shelled edamame and fresh corn kernels. Versatility is part of edamame's charm. There are countless ways to work it into your cooking:

- Substitute for [lima beans](#) in succotash
- Substitute for all types of beans in recipes (especially frozen beans and peas)
- Blitz into a bright green hummus
- Use in place of nuts for a lower-fat pesto
- Make guacamole with puréed edamame replacing some or all of the mashed avocado
- Sprinkle over pizza
- Toss with pasta

Or try one of these recipes from Forks Over Knives:



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- [Spicy Soba Bowls with Bok Choy](#)
- [Broccoli Crunch Salad](#)
- [Grilled Corn Succotash](#)
- [Forbidden Rice Bowl with Quick-Pickled Cabbage](#)
- [Red Rice and Edamame Bowl with Spring Veggies](#)
- [Layered Black Rice Salad](#)
- [Potato-Edamame Hash on Toast](#)
- [Summer Squash Veggie Skewers Over Edamame Quinoa](#)