



How to Use Beans as a Meat Substitute in Any Recipe

By Mary Margaret Chappell
March 11 2019

Choosing a plant-based diet doesn't mean giving up the meat-based dishes you love. On the contrary, there are lots of plant foods that make very tasty substitutes for meat, including—and especially—beans. Here's how the hearty legumes can replace beef, chicken, pork, and even bacon in your favorite recipes.

Substitute Lentils for Ground Meat

With their tiny size and toothsome texture, green, brown, and black lentils are one of the easiest plant food swaps to make. The switch works for everything from [sloppy joes](#) to [pasta sauce](#). Replace 1 pound of ground meat with 2 cups of cooked, drained lentils. Keep cooking time to around 30 minutes (reduce it if necessary) so the lentils stay whole and firm. Pre-cooked boxed or canned lentils also do the trick when time is short.

Use Chickpeas Instead of Chicken or Turkey

The color and chewiness of chickpeas can mimic that of chicken and turkey meat. Coarsely mashed, chickpeas can stand in for poultry in your favorite sandwich salads. Blended with breadcrumbs, they can be turned into mouthwatering [burgers](#) and kid-friendly [nuggets](#). You can also just add them whole to recipes for soups and pot pies.

Use equal amounts of cooked chickpeas (by volume or weight) for cooked or raw chicken or turkey.

Mix and Match Beans for Meaty Textures

When a meat-based recipe such as chili or soup already calls for beans, try adding a different type to replace the meat. This gives the dish added color and flavor plus a satisfying play of textures. ([Three Bean Chili for a Crowd](#) is a great example.) Pair smaller bean varieties with larger ones and vice versa, and use equal amounts of cooked beans (by volume or weight) to replace the meat. Reduce cooking time to under an hour: Beans don't require as much simmering as meats do. And don't forget about the tasty beans you can find in the freezer aisle, such as edamame, lima beans, and favas!

Turn to Bean Burgers for Bigger Cuts

Take away the bun and give bean burger patties different shapes to turn them into steaks, cutlets, and chunky pieces that can be added at the last minute to hearty

stews. Most bean burgers, such as the [Basic Veggie Burger](#), can be cooked and frozen for make-ahead ease.

Oven-Roast Beans for Bacon-Like Bits

Get a crunchy, smoky, bacon-like fix from crispy roasted beans. Use our recipe for [Jordanian Roasted Chickpeas](#) or toss 1½ cups cooked beans (any type except lentils) with 1 tablespoon chili powder, smoked paprika, or your favorite spice blend, then roast them at 400°F on a parchment-lined baking sheet for 35 to 40 minutes until lightly browned. Cool completely, then use anywhere you'd use bacon or bacon bits. Store roasted beans in an airtight container to keep them crisp for up to 3 days.

Ready to get started? Check out [Forks Meal Planner](#), FOK's easy weekly meal-planning tool to keep you on a healthy plant-based path.