



CICILS Global Pulse Confederation  
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PHONE : +971 4 363 36 12  
WEBSITE : [www.pulses.org](http://www.pulses.org)

## Cooking with Pulses: A New Era for an Ancient Crop

Pulses are consumed by the kilo in Africa and Asia, but surprisingly absent on Western menus. That is about to change; the secret is out about pulses.

This ancient food crop has formed an essential part of diets all over the world for thousands of years, from Esau's biblical bowl of lentil stew to the dhal Mahatma Gandhi lived on. And when it comes to today's dietary and environmental challenges, pulses have many answers as they are high in protein and fibre, and low in fat. In addition, they require a fraction of the water that many other popular parts of global diets demand, meaning their cultivation is also sustainable in a world of scarce natural resources.

### The History of Pulse Production

The earliest production of pulses can be traced as far back as 7500 BC, when lentils indigenous to South Western Asia and the Mediterranean region were first farmed.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of lentil production was also discovered in Egyptian pyramids and dry peas were found in a Swiss village that are thought to date back to the Stone Age.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that chickpeas spread from the ancient Mediterranean area between Morocco in the west and the Himalayas in east during the period prior to 3000 BC.<sup>3</sup>

### New Ways to Eat an Ancient Staple Food

The word "pulse" may originate from the Latin word "puls" for thick soup. Lentils, beans, chickpeas and peas are enjoyed in many ways, including simple stews. Thanks to a recent renaissance in creative ways to cook with pulses, there are numerous new and exciting ways we can pack them into our daily diets in flours, appetizers, mains, desserts and even cocktails, here are a few ideas:

- **Pancakes:** Seasoned chickpea flour can make a nutritious, gluten-free alternative to breakfast pancakes that can be topped with sweet or savoury foods.
- **Snacks:** To beat the mid-morning munchies, oven-roast some pre-cooked lentils with sunflower oil, chili flakes, garlic powder and a pinch of oregano for a punchy, crunchy snack.
- **Burgers:** For a healthier, burger or vegetarian option, kidney beans can be mashed, seasoned and oven cooked. Borlotti, butter beans or chickpeas can also be used. Beans can be used as a complementary ingredient. Create a 100% black bean burger, OR add 50% black beans to your beef for a new approach!
- **Potatoes:** White beans added to mashed potatoes are an awesome way to mix up the traditional dish. Blending pulses as a partner or a replacement is a great way to improve protein intake without changing your meal plan.
- **Purees:** Blend peas with broccoli and mint to make a nutrient packed alternative to mashed potato to accompany your meal. Or blitz white cannellini beans with garlic, thyme and a dash of truffle oil to make a creamy puree to top bruschetta.
- **Cakes:** Black beans can be a secret ingredient to a rich, gluten-free chocolate cake.

### Pulses in World Cuisine

Today, pulses are the main component of many national dishes. Below are a few examples of traditional recipes made from pulses. The complete collection can be found on [pulses.org](http://pulses.org) in the National Signature Dish section:

- **Brazil:** Black beans are slow-cooked with meat and sausages to make the stew feijoada. In Bahia, black eyed-peas are seasoned and fried to make spicy acarajé.
- **Myanmar:** Yellow split peas are ground to make flour, mixed with water and left to set, making a yellow tofu that can be eaten fresh in a salad or deep fried.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.todayscience.org/AS/article/as.v1i1p55.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Mat Chaudhry, Green Gold: Value-added pulses Quantum Media ISBN 1-61364-696-8

<sup>3</sup> K.B.Wanjari, Origin and history of pulses,. Dr. Panjabrao Krishi Vidyapeeth University, Akola, Maharashtra, India



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- **China:** Kidney bean rolls named yun dou juan are very popular in Beijing.
- **Colombia:** Red beans are often cooked with pork, white rice, ground meat, fried egg, plantain and avocado among other ingredients to make dishes such as bandeja paisa.
- **Ethiopia:** Powdered chickpeas or broad beans are mixed with onion, garlic and ginger or chilli peppers to make shiro, a favourite dish during celebrations.
- **Egypt:** The spicy stew made from fava beans, ful medames, is the national dish of Egypt and is traditionally eaten at breakfast.
- **France:** Puy lentils are featured in many national dishes
- **India:** Dhal, a stew prepared from spices and split lentils is a staple food across all of Southern Asia, traditionally eaten with rice.
- **Italy:** Traditional Minestrone soup uses borlotti beans along with an array of vegetables.
- **Israel:** Falafel - deep fried balls made from ground chickpeas or fava beans – are considered the national dish of Israel are popular as a street food across the globe.
- **Japan:** Azuki beans are mixed with sugar to create a sweet paste called an which is used in desserts.
- **Macedonia:** Butter beans, onion and red pepper are combined to make the national dish tavče gravče.
- **Spain:** Cocido madrileño mixes chickpeas with meat and vegetables to make a popular winter dish.
- **Turkey:** Chickpeas are blended to make the world famous dip hummus
- **Venezuela:** A staple throughout Latin America, black beans are seasoned with cumin and oregano as well as onions and garlic to make frijoles negros.

### Tips for Storing and Cooking Pulses for Maximum Convenience

Cooking from scratch doesn't need to be a chore. Pulses are so convenient and versatile that a few quick tips will help you make meals in minutes. For example, you can cook up a whole bag of lentils at the weekend, and store them for up to five days to make a variety of meals during the week. Once you have boiled the lentils, scoop out any residue, drain then rinse them with cold water. For easy storage, decant the lentils into a pot and cover with cold water. Add a squeeze of lemon to help them keep fresher for longer.

Dry pulses can be kept for up to a year in a cool, dry place if they are in firmly sealed packets or pots. Canned pulses will also have a long shelf life so can be bought in bulk.

Dry beans, whole peas and chickpeas need to be soaked before use, as they do not readily absorb water; this is why many canned pulses come in water.

When cooking your pulses, add a little olive oil to the saucepan; this will prevent the water becoming frothy. You can also add seasonings like onion, garlic and herbs while you cook your pulses to add extra flavor. Avoid adding acidic ingredients such as tomato and vinegar, however, as they will slow down the cooking process.



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**Further Resources:**

**National Signature Dishes on Pulses.org**

<http://www.pulses.org/recipes/national-signature-dishes>

Countries all over the world have submitted their national dish to represent their cuisine on pulses.org. Search by country, pulse or meal type and get creative in your kitchen.