

## Beans Bring Big Health Benefits to Winter Meals

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With colder temperatures and busy winter schedules, many families look for meals that are warm, filling, and easy to prepare. Nutrition educators point to one simple ingredient that checks all three boxes: beans.

Beans are widely recognized as one of the most nutritious and affordable pantry staples available. They are naturally high in fiber, which supports healthy digestion and helps the body stay regular. Fiber also works alongside plant-based protein to help people feel full longer after meals, which can reduce unnecessary snacking and help stretch food budgets.

In addition to keeping appetites satisfied, beans support heart health. Research shows that regularly eating beans may help lower cholesterol levels and support steady blood sugar, providing longer-lasting energy throughout the day. Because they are shelf-stable and low cost, beans are an accessible way for households to add nutrition to meals without increasing grocery spending.

One easy way to use beans during the winter months is in a hearty, homemade soup.

### **February Recipe: Hearty Bean & Veggie Soup**

Serves: 6

Cook Time: About 30 minutes

#### **Ingredients**

2 cans beans (pinto, black, or kidney), drained and rinsed  
1 can diced tomatoes  
1 cup frozen mixed vegetables  
4 cups water or broth  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1 teaspoon onion powder  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Optional: leftover ham, ground beef, or shredded chicken

#### **Directions**

Add beans, tomatoes, vegetables, and water or broth to a large pot. Stir in the seasonings and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and allow the soup to simmer for about 20 minutes. If using leftover meat, stir it in during the final few minutes of cooking. Serve warm.

**Create Better Health Tip:**

Pairing this soup with whole grain toast or cornbread can make the meal even more filling while adding additional fiber.