

Cooking (and Canning) Kidney Beans

COOK THEM PROPERLY (AND NOT IN A SLOW COOKER!) FOR SAFETY

Red kidney beans are a healthy food – unless they're not cooked properly. They contain a compound ("PHA"), found in many types of beans, and at especially high levels in red kidney beans. PHA can be toxic at high levels; in fact, consuming only 4 or 5 raw or undercooked red kidney beans can make a person seriously ill.

Fortunately, PHA can be destroyed through proper cooking. Unfortunately for fans of slow cookers, the device does not get hot enough to kill the toxin, so using a slow cooker for uncooked kidney beans or dishes containing them is not advised.

To safely cook dried kidney beans, the FDA recommends this procedure:

- Soak beans for at least 5 hours in water. While not needed for safety, it's recommended to change the water periodically.
- Drain the beans from the final soaking water.
- Boil the beans in fresh water for 30 minutes. While the toxin is actually destroyed when boiled for 10 minutes at 212°F, scientists recommend boiling for 30 minutes to be certain that the beans reach the proper temperature for the length of time necessary.
- **Do not use a slow cooker to cook dried red beans.**

It is also recommended that beans not be used as toys or art supplies. Besides being toxic, raw kidney beans are a small object hazard for young children.

Note that **commercially canned red beans** have been processed under the proper conditions and don't require the procedures listed above. When **home canning** dried beans, follow the procedure recommended by the NCHFP for a safe product.

For further information, see <https://enewsletters.k-state.edu/youaskedit/2017/10/13/cooking-dry-beans-safely/#:~:text=Boil%20beans%20in%20fresh%20water,won't%20get%20hot%20enough.>

For information on canning dried beans, visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation (NCHFP) website at https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_04/beans_peas_shelled.html.

Brought to you by the UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County
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