

Seasonal Eating
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Green Beans
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Green beans, also known as string beans or snap beans, are a versatile and nutritious vegetable for the summer. Named for the sound they make when broken into pieces to cook, they are also known as string beans because older varieties had strings down the sides of the pods that had to be removed. Most varieties today are stringless. Although we often call these green beans, they come in lots of colors like yellow (also known as wax beans), purple, green and speckled. Some varieties are cylindrical while others are flat and wide. No matter what variety you use or what you call them, snap beans are a favorite of both adults and children.



Green beans are easy to prepare and offer a delightful canvas for creativity. Of course, most people in the south enjoy them simmered well with seasoning like ham, but they can be enjoyed many other ways as well such as sauteed or roasted or even raw.

Look for undamaged pods that are firm (not wilted) and snappy with small beans inside. Larger sized beans in the pods indicate more mature beans and they may have tougher pods. Try to choose beans that are similar in size to ensure even cooking.

Beans have two ways they grown – either on a bushy plant (bush beans) that tends to bear in a short time frame or on a vining plant (pole beans) that climbs up a support and bears over a longer period. The bush beans are generally better for canning or preserving as they all come in at once while the pole beans come in fewer at a time for fresh eating – although you can use them either way. The growth habit doesn't determine the flavor or type of bean – just the way in which it produces. Here are a few different varieties:

Haricot verts or French Beans – These are longer, thinner and more tender than most green beans. The name is French for green bean. These are excellent for salads or for sauteing and are usually very tender.

Blue Lake – This variety is one of the standards of the bush beans (it also comes in a pole version) with cylindrical pods and tiny beans inside. It is a popular canning bean.

Romano – These beans are a flat podded pole bean that can be green, yellow or purple. They are crisp and sweet and can be used for fresh eating or canned. This type of flat podded bean is often referred to as Italian beans and are preferred by some people.

Yellow Wax – These beans are a bush bean and are like the green beans except for color. They are often used in three bean salads.

The recipe below cooks the beans in the microwave until crisp tender and then they are sauteed in bacon drippings until the desired texture (crisp or soft). A topping of dried cherries, goat cheese, almonds and the crumbled bacon is added over the top. Very festive and flavorful dish. You can substitute feta or even shavings of Parmesan cheese for the goat cheese or dried cranberries or raisins for the cherries.

Green beans are a definite family friendly side for the summer. Put some on your plate this month with your grilled or baked meat or poultry. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Green Beans with Cherries and Bacon

6 slices bacon

1 (12-ounce) bag haricot verts or green beans

salt

black pepper

1/2 cup dried cherries

2 ounces goat cheese

1/4 cup toasted, slivered almonds

In a large skillet, cook the bacon until crisp and remove and crumble. Drain off all but about 2-3 tablespoons of the drippings. Place the green beans in a microwave bowl with a little water, cover and cook just until crisp tender. Drain and pour beans into pan with bacon drippings. Cook, stirring until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Pour into serving dish and top with dried cherries, crumbled goat cheese, almonds and reserved bacon.