

how to make refried beans

How to make refried beans is a culinary skill that can enhance a variety of dishes, from tacos to burritos, and even serve as a delightful dip. This staple of Mexican cuisine is not only delicious but also packed with nutrients, making it a versatile ingredient in many meals. This article will guide you through the process of making refried beans from scratch, including tips for selecting beans, cooking methods, and variations to suit your taste.

Understanding Refried Beans

Refried beans, or "frijoles refritos," are made from cooked and mashed beans, typically pinto beans, though black beans are also popular. The term "refried" comes from the Spanish "refritos," meaning "well-fried," referring to the cooking method used. They are a staple in Mexican households and are often served as a side dish, spread, or filling.

Why Make Your Own Refried Beans?

Making your own refried beans offers several advantages:

- Flavor: Homemade beans taste fresher and can be customized to your liking.
- Health: You control the ingredients, allowing you to avoid preservatives and excessive sodium often found in canned beans.
- Cost: Dried beans are generally less expensive than their canned counterparts, making this a budget-friendly option.

Ingredients

To make refried beans, you will need the following ingredients:

- Dried beans (pinto or black beans)
- Water (for soaking and cooking)
- Onion (1 medium, chopped)
- Garlic (2-3 cloves, minced)
- Oil or lard (for frying; options include vegetable oil, olive oil, or bacon fat)
- Salt (to taste)
- Optional ingredients:
 - Cumin (for additional flavor)
 - Jalapeño or other chili peppers (for heat)
 - Cheese (for a creamy texture)

Step-by-Step Guide to Making Refried Beans

Step 1: Choose and Prepare Your Beans

1. **Selecting Beans:** Choose high-quality dried beans. Pinto beans are the traditional choice, but black beans or even kidney beans can be used.
2. **Sorting and Rinsing:** Before cooking, sort through the beans to remove any debris or small stones. Rinse them thoroughly under cold water.

Step 2: Soak the Beans

Soaking beans helps to soften them and reduces cooking time. You can choose one of the following methods:

- **Overnight Soak:** Place the rinsed beans in a large bowl and cover them with water. Let them soak overnight for at least 6-8 hours.
- **Quick Soak:** If you're short on time, you can bring the beans to a boil in a large pot with enough water to cover them. Boil for 2-3 minutes, then remove from heat and let them sit for 1 hour. Drain and rinse before cooking.

Step 3: Cook the Beans

1. **Boil the Beans:** In a large pot, add the soaked and rinsed beans along with fresh water. The water should be about 2 inches above the beans. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat.
2. **Simmer:** Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and let the beans simmer. Cover the pot partially and cook for about 1.5 to 2 hours, or until the beans are tender. Check periodically and add more water if necessary to keep the beans submerged.
3. **Season:** Add salt to taste when the beans are almost done cooking.

Step 4: Mash the Beans

Once the beans are fully cooked, it's time to mash them:

1. **Drain:** Reserve some of the cooking liquid, then drain the beans.
2. **Mash:** In a large bowl, use a potato masher or fork to mash the beans to

your desired consistency. For a creamier texture, you can blend them using an immersion blender or a food processor.

3. Add Cooking Liquid: If the beans are too thick, gradually add some of the reserved cooking liquid until you reach your preferred consistency.

Step 5: Fry the Beans

1. Heat the Oil: In a large skillet, heat 2-3 tablespoons of oil or lard over medium heat.

2. Sauté Aromatics: Add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the minced garlic and cook for another minute until fragrant.

3. Add Beans: Stir in the mashed beans, mixing well. Cook for about 5-10 minutes, stirring frequently to prevent sticking. This step enhances the flavor and gives the beans a creamy texture.

4. Season: Adjust the seasoning with salt and optional spices like cumin or chili powder. You can also add cooked jalapeños or other peppers for extra flavor and heat.

Step 6: Serve and Store

- Serving: Refried beans can be served hot as a side dish, used in burritos or tacos, or enjoyed as a dip with tortilla chips. Top with cheese, sour cream, or fresh cilantro for added flavor.

- Storage: Store any leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week. Refried beans can also be frozen for up to three months. Thaw and reheat on the stovetop or in the microwave, adding a bit of water if they become too thick.

Variations and Tips

- Vegetarian/Vegan: Use vegetable oil or olive oil instead of lard to keep the dish vegetarian or vegan.

- Spicy Refried Beans: Incorporate diced jalapeños or other hot peppers during the sautéing step to add heat.

- Creamy Refried Beans: For an ultra-creamy texture, stir in a couple of tablespoons of cream cheese or sour cream just before serving.

- Cheesy Refried Beans: Mix in shredded cheese while cooking to create a cheesy version of refried beans.

Conclusion

Making your own refried beans is a simple and rewarding culinary endeavor that elevates your meals with rich flavors and textures. By following the steps outlined above, you can enjoy a homemade version that is both delicious and healthy. Whether you choose to keep it traditional or experiment with variations, your homemade refried beans will surely impress family and friends alike. So gather your ingredients, roll up your sleeves, and get ready to enjoy this classic dish that has captured the hearts of many!

Frequently Asked Questions

What ingredients do I need to make refried beans from scratch?

To make refried beans from scratch, you'll need dried pinto beans, onion, garlic, vegetable oil or lard, salt, and optionally, spices like cumin or chili powder.

How long should I soak the beans before cooking them?

Soak the dried pinto beans for at least 6-8 hours or overnight in water to help soften them and reduce cooking time.

Can I use canned beans to make refried beans?

Yes, you can use canned beans to make refried beans. Just drain and rinse them before mashing and frying.

What is the best way to mash the beans for refried beans?

You can use a potato masher, a fork, or a food processor to mash the beans to your desired consistency, whether smooth or chunky.

How do I add flavor to my refried beans?

You can add flavor by sautéing onions and garlic in oil before adding the beans, and by incorporating spices like cumin, chili powder, or lime juice.

Can I make refried beans ahead of time?

Yes, you can make refried beans ahead of time. Store them in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week or freeze for longer storage.

What dishes can I serve refried beans with?

Refried beans are versatile and can be served with tacos, burritos, nachos, or as a side dish with rice and grilled meats.

How do I make refried beans vegetarian or vegan?

To make refried beans vegetarian or vegan, use vegetable oil instead of lard and ensure that any broth or seasonings used are plant-based.

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