



NUTRITION NOTES

PULSES ON EVERY PLATE MAY HELP WITH RISING FOOD COSTS

By Debra McLennan, RD, APG Food and Nutrition Coordinator

With rising food costs, consumers are looking for affordable as well as healthy food choices at the grocery store. Pulses can help stretch food dollars in the kitchen and provide nutritious options for every meal and recipe.

Food Inflation

While the annual food inflation in Canada decreased to 5.6% in October 2023 from 5.9% in September 2023 and is the lowest since December 2021¹, the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity Public Trust Research 2023 report indicates that the cost of food continues to be the most important issue to Canadian consumers². The Edmonton Community Foundation's 2023 Vital Signs Report on Food Security reports that the cost to feed a family of four has increased from \$10,920 in 2013 to \$15,306 in 2022 and the average grocery bill has increased 70% between 2000 and 2020³.

Finding ways to make food dollars go further and still put nutritious meals on the table is where pulses may help today's consumers.

Pulses: Dry or Canned?

The age-old debate – what to use, dry or canned pulses? Nutritionally, both formats provide the same level of protein, fibre, complex carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Regular canned pulses typically have sodium in the canning liquid, however, draining and thoroughly rinsing them will reduce the sodium content up to 40% or there are no-salt-added formats available.

PULSE TYPE	DRY (COST/100 ML COOKED)	CANNED (COST/100 ML)
Chickpeas	Ave \$0.13	Ave \$0.28 (store brand) Ave \$0.38 (brand name)
Beans	Ave \$0.13	Ave \$0.35 (store brand) Ave \$0.47 (brand name)
Lentils	Ave \$0.13	Ave \$0.35 (store brand) Ave \$0.43 (brand name)

The difference between these two formats is convenience, variety and cost. Canned pulses are convenient to use as they are already cooked and ready to use, providing 2 cups (500 mL) cooked pulses in a 19 oz (540 mL) can. While canned pulses are convenient, there are limited varieties available. Dry pulses provide more choices like split peas, split lentils, desi chickpeas, great northern, navy and pinto beans.

The biggest difference between dry and canned pulses is the cost. Dry pulses are most often found in a 900 g package and prices range between \$3.47 to \$4.494. Canned pulses are most often found in a 19 oz (540 mL) format with prices ranging from \$1.37 to \$2.494 for the store brand and \$1.29 to \$2.794 for brand names. The chart below compares the cost of 100 mL cooked chickpeas,

beans and lentils from canned store brands plus national brands and dry store brands (note, dry pulses are only available as a store brand)⁴.

Overall, dry pulses are less expensive than canned pulses, however some planning is required for cooking as well as soaking time for beans and chickpeas. When cooking dry pulses, it's a good idea to cook extra and then freeze in airtight containers to use in other recipes. Although canned pulses cost more than dry, they offer the convenience of just opening the can and using the pulses immediately. In the end, whether choosing dry or canned pulses, they are still a budget friendly source of protein and other key nutrients.

Blend to Extend and Add Nutrition
Pulses are the perfect ingredient to add to recipes to amp up the

nutrition content. Adding lentils to a jar or can of ready-to-use pasta sauce, or chickpeas to a ready-to-eat soup is an inexpensive way to add protein and fibre to create a hearty, nutritious meal. White beans added to smoothies are a budget-friendly way to increase protein and add fibre for a nutritious breakfast or snack on the go. Make a salad a meal by adding green or yellow split peas.

Adding pulses to a family favourite recipe is an easy way to increase the number of servings to have leftovers for lunch the next day or to freeze for a quick meal later in the week. Try adding an extra can or 2 cups/500 mL cooked kidney beans to chili, or a can or 2 cups (500 mL) cooked black beans to beef stew, or chickpeas to chicken pot pie to get two to four more portions from these types of recipes. Blend in mashed lentils to a pound of ground beef or chicken when making burgers to get two to three more burgers.



Look for the Product of Canada label on pulses at grocery stores.

Cook Once, Eat Twice

Recipes that can be utilized in a variety of ways save time, money and help reduce food waste. Plus, it adds variety to leftovers! Check out the Mighty Marinara Sauce on the next page – one recipe that can be used three ways. Our Beans & Rice Master Mix is another example where it can be used as a filling for tacos, a topping for nachos, or a soup by adding broth. Our Red Lentil Bolognese Sauce can be used as a topping for spaghetti and a filling for lasagna or cannelloni. Our Cocoa

Cookie, Cherry Berry and Mango Breeze Bean Smoothies can be used to make frozen pops or smoothie bowls.

The Last Word

Whether using canned or cooking from dry, pulses are a budget friendly, nutritious addition to family friendly meals. These cost-effective nutrition powerhouses can help stretch today's food dollar by increasing the number of portions

in a recipe or reducing food waste through cook once, eat twice recipes. Check out the APG website for tips on cooking pulses and recipe ideas to add pulses to everyday meals and snacks.

Questions about pulse nutrition, recipes or APG programs? Contact APG's Food & Nutrition Coordinator, Debra McLennan, at dmclennan@albertapulse.com or (780) 986-9398 ext. 109.

References ((accessed online December 2023))

1. Trading Economics. (2023) Canada Food Inflation. Retrieved from: www.tradingeconomics.com/canada/food-inflation#:~:text=the%20previous%20year,-Cost%20of%20food%20in%20Canada%20increased%205.60%20percent%20in%20October,macro%20models%20and%20analysts%20expectations
2. Canadian Centre for Food Integrity. (Nov 2023). 2023 Public Trust Research Report. Retrieved from: www.foodintegrity.ca/download-2023-research-report/
3. Edmonton Community Foundation. (2023). Vital Signs Report: Food Security. Retrieved from: www.ecfoundation.org/vital-signs-report-2023/
4. Various Canadian grocery stores online shopping – retrieved pricing as of December 1, 2023.