NUTRITION NOTES

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF PULSE RECIPES!

By Debra McLennan, RD, APG Food and Nutrition Coordinator

Recipes for pulses have come a long way over the past 35 years! From old favourites to new and imaginative creations, there's a recipe for every pulse, for every plate.

Looking at APG's pulse recipes over the past 35 years takes us on quite a journey! The earliest example is *The Perfect Pulses…Cooking with Alberta Beans, Peas, Lentils* from the 1980s and the Pulse Growers Association. Featuring 38 recipes ranging from Old Fashioned Pea Soup, Four Bean Salad and Lorraine's Chili to no less than six baked bean recipes! At that time, Alberta commercial pulse production had grown to 30,000 acres annually with green and yellow peas; great northern, navy, pink, pinto and red Mexican beans; and green lentils available to consumers in supermarkets or specialty stores.

The Alberta Pool Bean Division's *Bean Country Cuisine* booklet also from the 1980s featured a whopping 53 bean recipes! There was more variety in the recipes with an extensive list of breads, loaves, muffins and desserts like Lemon Dill Bread, Carrot Pineapple Muffins and Creamy Bean Fudge. These recipes focused on the bean varieties of Southern Alberta including pinto, pink, great northern and small reds with information on cooking, nutrition and helpful hints.

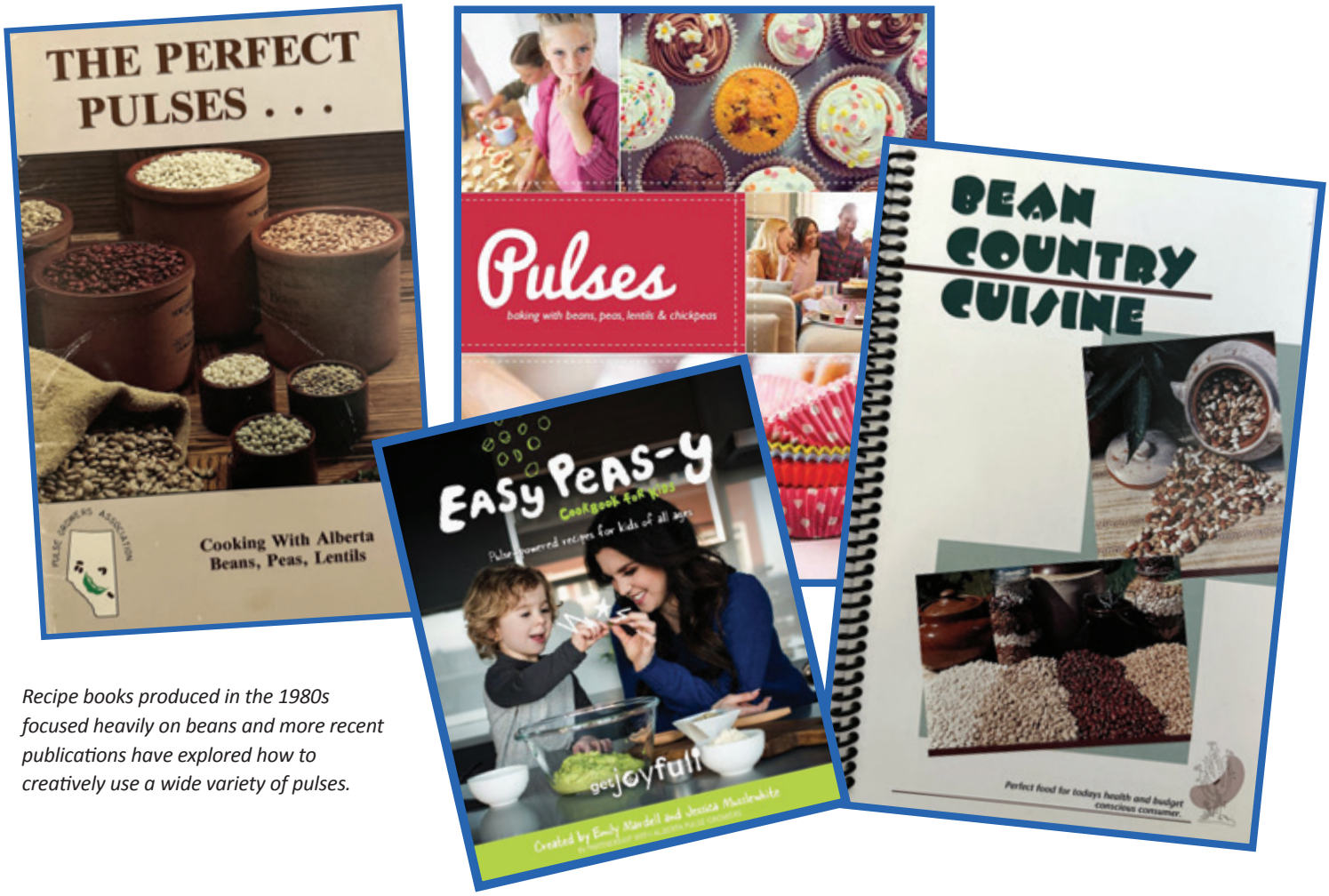
We start to see the modernization of pulse recipes in the early 2000s with the Pulse Canada, Saskatchewan Pulse Growers and APG collaboration *Pulses – Cooking with beans, peas, lentils and chickpeas* and then again with Pulse Canada's 2012 recipe booklet of the same name. Recipes include chickpeas and black beans, alongside lentils and peas and pulses from other Canadian pulse producing provinces. There is also more extensive information on pulse nutrition, purees, and agriculture.

It was also during this time that APG was steadily adding new recipes to the website and created the *Alberta Pulses…Surprisingly Good* series in 2014. This was a series of recipes printed accordion style and featured six recipes using Alberta grown pulses. This led to printing recipe cards to share with Foods teachers and students along with consumers and producers at a variety of shows and conventions.

A major turning point in pulse recipes and consumer interest came in 2016 with International Year of Pulses (IYP). Pulse Canada updated its recipe booklet to add new recipes from each of the Canadian pulse commissions plus some gluten free recipes. This booklet was shared across the country and became a favourite with Alberta health professionals, teachers and consumers.

Building on the momentum from IYP, APG launched three recipe booklets in 2017. One featured Alberta pulses in a variety of recipes like the Green Split Pea & Cauliflower Soup, Rainbow Salad and Hiker's Cookies. The other recipe booklet, *Pulses – baking with beans, peas, lentils & chickpeas* focused exclusively on the versatility of pulses in a baking application with recipes like Black Bean Brownies, Cranberry Orange Muffins and Lemony Chickpea Cake. The special edition *Alberta Pulses from Coast to Coast*, featured 10 new recipes inspired by Canada's 150th birthday! These recipes celebrated regional Canadian cuisine while highlighting Alberta grown pulses and brought us Lentil & Mushroom Sweet Potato Poutine, Faba Bean & Barley Salad and Mixed Berry Aqua Faba Meringue Pie.

With the success of these resources, APG created the limited-edition *Picnic Perfect Pulses* in 2018 with the three-in-one recipe concept using Alberta pulses. Here we shared that you can quick pickle pulses and that split peas and pesto make a delicious dip. More delicious and unique recipes for the APG website!



Recipe books produced in the 1980s focused heavily on beans and more recent publications have explored how to creatively use a wide variety of pulses.

With consumers still wrestling with how to add pulses to their diet, APG streamlined its recipe resources in 2019 to just one, the *Tried & True* booklet. This collection of 22 recipes showcased the ease of adding pulses to family favourite, everyday meals. The Pina Colada White Bean Smoothie became a staple recipe at food demonstrations, along with Masala Chickpea, Mango & Spinach Salad and Hoisin Turkey & Lentil Lettuce Wraps.

In 2020, the *Easy Peas-y Cookbook for Kids* was launched. This collaboration with GetJoyfull featured recipes for kids and teenagers and was designed to help families find simple yet delicious recipes to get kids into the kitchen and have fun with food. Chicken Lentil Dippers, Handy Dandy Hand Pies, Curry in a Hurry and Keen-for-the-Bean Smoothies are just a few of the stand-out recipes in this resource.

Now in 2025, APG's *Explore the Pulse-ibilities* is the latest collection of amazing recipes with breakfast options like Red Lentil Overnight Oats, Lentil Salad Rolls for lunch and Sheet Pan Lemon Chicken with Beans & Veggies for dinner. The recipes in this booklet are heart healthy and diabetes friendly with tons of meal and snack ideas for all appetites!

The Last Word

While pulses have been around for centuries, it's exciting to see how far pulse recipes have come! From pea soup and chili to smoothie bowls and salad rolls, there's a recipe for every age and taste. Check out the APG website for delicious recipe ideas to add protein and fibre-packed pulses to meals and snacks, everyday!

Do you have questions about pulse nutrition, recipes or APG programs? Contact APG's Food & Nutrition Coordinator, Debra McLennan (780) 986-9398 ext. 109.

Debra's favourite pulse dish is the Honey Pecan White Bean Bread Pudding from the APG website!