

Florida Food Fare

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Butter Beans and Lima Beans

Many varieties of beans are grown in Florida, both in home gardens and commercially. Almost all beans may be produced in frost-free areas in the winter; however pole, lima and butter beans grow better in the summer as they need warmer soils and a longer growing time. If you are not from the South you may wonder: "What are butter beans?" For many of us Southerners we don't eat lima beans – we eat butter beans.

One of the bulletins from the Georgia Cooperative Extension says: "*The terms Lima bean and butter bean are interchangeable.*" Actually there is a little difference in the varieties. Fordhooks are the big lima beans that are available in the markets in many forms – fresh, canned, frozen and dried. Butter beans are smaller varieties, usually of the *Dixie* or *Henderson* type. There also is a *Dixie* butter pea that has a similar taste, only shaped more like a pea. Depending on variety, these butter beans or peas can be white, green or speckled. Like the Lima bean, the butter bean is also available in several forms: fresh, canned, frozen and dried. Although for most Southerners none of the other forms compare in taste to the fresh butter beans.

Harvesting times vary from late spring through the summer months. You may begin to find them in the local grocery stores and produce markets soon, with the North Florida grown beans being available in June, then from Georgia, South Carolina and other southern states in mid summer. In the Sarasota area I sometimes have to ask local produce markets to try and get them in. If you are traveling in Florida north of Tampa, you should begin to find them at roadside produce markets by early May, and at peak in local Florida markets through June.

If you cannot find the fresh butter beans, then the closest available forms are the frozen butter beans or baby lima beans. The smaller butter or baby lima beans has a creamier, more delicate taste than the starchier lima beans. They can be used interchangeably in recipes.

Nutrition Facts for Butter Beans or Baby Lima Beans: 1/4 Cup serving size (45 gms) contains: 170 calories, 5 calories from fat, 0 gm saturated fat, 0 gm

cholesterol, 32 g carbohydrates, 10 g dietary fiber, 10 g protein, 5 mg sodium, 4% DV (daily value) calcium; 15% DV iron.

Nutrition Facts for Large Lima Beans: 1/4 Cup serving size (45 gms) contains: 150 calories, 0 calories from fat, 0 gm saturated fat, 0 gm cholesterol, 28 g carbohydrates, 9 g dietary fiber, 10 g protein, 10 mg sodium, 4% DV (daily value) calcium; 2% DV iron.

Preparation: Butter or lima beans can be used in various types of recipes where ingredients are boiled, baked or microwaved. They provide a tasty side dish when steamed or boiled for about 20 minutes (for fresh or frozen types), adding a little butter, meat seasoning or bouillon, along with desired salt and pepper seasonings. Dried forms will need to be soaked at least six hours or overnight before using. They also mix well with other vegetables for casseroles and soups, or for a different and unique dish, try a making a bean pie (recipe below).

Recipes:

Lima Beans With Mustard Sauce

2 cups fresh butter beans or 1 package (10 ounces) frozen baby lima beans, cooked and drained	1/2 cup low fat salad dressing or reduced fat mayonnaise 2 tablespoons 1% milk 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
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Cook fresh butter beans in water to cover and simmer for 15 – 20 minutes until tender. Cook frozen beans by package directions. Heat salad dressing, milk and mustard, stirring constantly. Turn hot beans into serving dish; pour hot sauce over beans. Serves 4.

Stir-Fry Ham and Lima Beans

1 tablespoon butter	2 cups fresh or 1 10-ounce box frozen Lima or Butter Beans
1/2 pound low sodium cooked ham, cut into 3x1/4-inch strips	1 tablespoon honey
1 medium onion, cut into thin wedges	1/4 teaspoon caraway seeds
2 tablespoons spicy brown mustard	

In large skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add ham and onion; cook about 8 minutes or until lightly browned, stirring occasionally. Stir in lima beans, mustard, honey and caraway; cover and cook 5 minutes. Uncover; cook 3 minutes more or until beans are tender, stirring occasionally. Makes 4 servings.

Lima Bean Casserole

(for crockpot cookers)

1 pound dry lima beans	3/4 cup packed brown sugar
1 tablespoon molasses	1 tablespoon dry mustard
1/4 to 1/2 cup butter	1/2 cup fat free sour cream

Cover beans with water. Drain, refill pot with water to cover beans, bring to boil and simmer till soft. Drain. In crockpot, mix beans and butter. Mix together sugar, salt, mustard. Sprinkle on beans. Stir molasses and sour cream together, pour over beans and mix all together. Cover and cook in crockpot on low for 4 to 6 hours. Makes 6 servings.

Butter Bean Custard Pie

1 cup large white butter beans, dried	2 eggs
3 cups water	1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
2 cups white sugar	1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour	1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup butter	1/4 teaspoon fat free half and half
1 tablespoon vanilla extract	1 unbaked 9 inch pie shell
1 pinch salt	

Soak dried beans in water overnight. The next morning, take hull off beans. Cook until well done in water. Do not add seasoning. Drain; mash beans. Add sugar, flour, butter, vanilla, eggs and salt to beans. Mix well. Add cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon and half and half. Blend together. Pour into a 9-inch unbaked pie shell. Bake at 350 degrees F (175 degrees C) for 30 to 45 minutes. Makes 1 - 9 inch pie.