

# *Florida Food Fare*

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## *Green Beans*

**Description:** Known as green beans or snap beans, many varieties are grown in Florida. The most common types are bush beans and pole beans. The yellow waxed beans should also be considered in this group. Some people may know these beans as “string beans” because of the thread that used to grow down the length of the pod. Scientific improvements in reducing the size of fibrous thread on snap beans have literally done away with the “strings.”

Snap beans are really the seed or pod of a leguminous plant. The entire bean is eaten as compared to peas, which usually are separated from the pod. This vegetable is “all-American,” having originated in Central and South America. It adapts well to a variety of climates and Florida’s unique climate has made it a heavy producer of snap beans during the winter and spring months. Florida leads the nation in the production of snap beans, growing 46% of the nation’s green beans. In 2000-2001 Florida growers produced 256 million pounds of snap beans with a value of \$138.4 million.

**Availability:** Snap beans are marketed from October through June. The peak supply comes in April at which time the most reasonable prices are also available to consumers. November/December is the period of peak supply in the fall season.

**Selection and Care:** Choose snap beans that are firm but tender, crisp, free from scars and reasonably well shaped. As the name implies, a good fresh snap bean snaps readily when broken. Pods containing immature seeds are the most desirable. Length is generally unimportant if the beans meet requirements for quality, although they are usually 5-6 inches in length. The seeds are larger in

pole beans since it is a broader bean than the bush beans. It should still be snapped even though some of the beans will fall out the pods.

Snap beans should be kept cool and protected from moisture loss until ready to use. Washing the beans before storage gives them a little extra moisture and helps to keep them fresh. Place in a storage bag at a temperature of 45-50 degrees F. Chilling injury can develop if beans are stored below 40 degrees F.

**Nutritional Value:** One cup cooked, fresh snap beans contains only 30 calories, no fat, sodium or cholesterol and is a good source of dietary fiber. It contains 93% water, 2 gm protein, 63 gm calcium, 8 mg iron, 680 IU vitamin A and 15 mg vitamin C.

**Use & Preparation:** When planning serving amount, keep in mind the following:  
1 pound green snap beans = five 1/2 cup servings  
1 16-oz can of green snap beans = four 1/2 cup servings  
1 10-oz pkg frozen snap beans = three 1/2 cup servings

Snap beans are one of Florida's favorite vegetables. Their versatility and wide acceptability make them popular in salad, casseroles, soups and as a vegetable accompaniment. Served plain or fancy, snap beans are delicious and nutritious. For those who want to season beans without the extra calories of fat, meat-flavored bouillon cubes and herbs are good choices. A small sliced onion added to the beans while cooking also enhances flavor.

### **Minted Green Beans with Red Onion**

2 pounds green beans, trim, snap	1 tablespoon cup olive oil
1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard	3 tablespoons minced fresh mint leaves
1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar	1/2 cup finely chopped red onion

Salt and pepper to taste

In a kettle of boiling water cook the beans for 2 to 4 minutes, or until they are crisp-tender. Transfer them with a slotted spoon to a bowl of ice and cold water to stop the cooking, and drain them well. Pat the beans dry with paper towels and chill them, covered, for at least 3 hours or overnight.

In a large bowl whisk together mustard, vinegar, and salt and pepper to taste, add oil in a stream, whisking, and whisk dressing until it is emulsified. Add beans, mint, and onion and toss mixture until it is combined well. Serves 6.