

SOUTHERN GREEN BEANS AND POTATOES

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Follow our complete, step-by-step, instructions to make one of the South's favorite side dishes.



Southern Green Beans and Potatoes

Or as we call them "Beans and Taters."

I may have been "born and raised" in the South, but I'm not much of a vegetable fan for reasons unknown. But, these two would be my first choice from any table or buffet.

If it were Potatoes and Green Beans, that would be even more like it. Smile. I do love my potatoes.

You could open up a can of beans and a can of "taters", but why not do them fresh when they are available. Fresh vegetables are so much better, and at this time of the year, they're starting to show up at roadside stands, farmers market and more.

Whether you call them green beans or snap beans doesn't really matter. They're one and the same.

Mama cooked them a lot, and she put a lot of effort and love into storing them up for us to also enjoy during the winter months when fresh ones weren't available.

Usually she was out in the garden early in the morning to pick the beans, a bushel or more at the time.

Next, she would grab a big old dishpan and head out to the front porch, usually with a neighbor or relative to string the beans and snap them.

I can easily visualize her sitting in her wooden rocker, apron on, dishpan filled with beans sitting in her lap. Often, there would be a glass of sweet tea sitting on the wooden floor of the front porch right beside of her.

As long as it took, they would sit and talk, string and snap, until the beans had all been cleaned and ready for cooking, canning, or freezing.

The summer sun would make the day hot, but the shade and hopefully cool breeze on that front porch were a welcome time of the day to sit down for a little bit, but still working just the same.

I couldn't help but recall those days as I worked on the 2 pounds of fresh beans I had purchased to prepare this recipe. No matter how hard I try, they will never be as good as hers. Smile.

Red potatoes were used here, mostly because I had them on hand. They also hold up a bit better

during the longer cooking time it will take to get the fresh beans cooked to perfection. Russets are good, but break up too easily after being cooked for awhile.

The day before I cooked these, I did another post here on Taste of Southern called **"How To Render Bacon Fat."** I wanted some bacon grease to season my beans with. It's liquid gold for such purposes.

So, if you're ready to cook up a pot of beans and taters like Mama would do them, then let's get on in the kitchen, and... Let's Get Cooking.

You'll need these ingredients to make our Green Beans and Potatoes recipe.

Begin by washing your potatoes under some cold running water. Gently scrub in the indentations to be sure you remove any dirt that might be in those. When finished, just set them aside for now.

I like to place some cold water in the sink to wash my beans.

It's kind of hard to just rinse them under running water, so place the beans in your sink and add enough water to get them to float. Then, swish them around good for a few minutes, looking for any trash or leaves as you rinse them clean.

Use your hands to scoop the beans out and place them in a large bowl or colander before draining the water and dirt from the sink.

Any dirt will settle in the bottom of the sink as you wash the beans. If you just drain the sink, the beans end up resting on top of the dirt and you haven't accomplished very much. Lift them out first, then drain the sink. Thank you for listening. Smile.

Now it's time to start the fun part. Yes, we'll do this one bean at a time, but it won't take long.

This is where Mama would place all the beans in a dishpan and head for the front porch to rock in her chair and snap the beans.

These particular beans are fresh, young and tender. They don't have a lot of "strings" on them, but you may have some that are a bit older that will need to have those strings removed. Stay with me

for a minute because I don't have a photo to illustrate this point.

See me holding the bean in the photo above? I'm holding out the end that was attached to the bush the beans grew on. You'll need to grasp this end between your fingers and snap the end. If it has a string attached, gently pull the end back and the string should come completely off as you pull the end down the length of the bean.

When you get to the end, snap that end off, and you should be able to pull that end back around and peel the string off from the other side. It's not complicated and you'll get much faster at this process after you've done a few.

If you leave the string attached and cook the beans you'll end up trying to chew the tough string, thinking you've found a hair or something in your beans. You don't want that to happen now do you?

Snap off both ends of the bean, removing any strings as you go.

Next, just hold each bean in your hands and snap it into bite sized pieces.

Continue to pull the strings off, snap the ends off, and snap the beans into bite sized pieces until you have them all done. Whew!

I only had two pounds here and I'm not very fast at this myself. Of course, I wasn't rushing. I was watching a program on the computer while I did mine.

Mama, and my aunts, use to sit on the porch and do this a bushel or more at a time. I couldn't help but think about that while I sat in air-conditioning and working on these few. Times sure have changed haven't they?

I decided to cut my potatoes into quarters. They were small to begin with, but I decided to cut them since I didn't have but a few on hand at the time. You can leave yours whole if you prefer. They will have plenty of time to cook as we boil the beans.

Grab a good sized stock pot and place the beans and potatoes inside. Add enough water to cover the beans by about 3 inches. You'll need a good amount of water to begin with. It will evaporate down as the beans cook.

Add your seasoning. I'm using about a Tablespoon of Bacon grease from where I just did the post on **How To Render Bacon Fat**. It's a great seasoning for beans in my opinion.

Add the sugar.

We can't forget the sugar. Mama always added a small amount of sugar to just about all the vegetables that she cooked, so I'm continuing the tradition. It just knocks the "edge" off of the taste of the vegetables as they cook.

Cook on Medium heat for 1 hour or longer.

Place the pot on your stove top over Medium heat. Once they start to boil, turn them down just a bit and let them cook at a low boil until tender.

You want the beans and potatoes to be done, but some folks like a little crunch in them. Just cook them until they reach the desired doneness that you and your family prefer.

After an hour on the stove top, add in the Black Pepper.

Then, add the salt.

You may also notice that I added a couple of strips of leftover bacon to this pot. I just had it in the kitchen following another recipe I'd prepared so I tossed it in for a bit more flavor.

Mama often used a big chunk of fat back, or a piece of side meat to season her vegetables. It pretty much depended on what was available at the time. You get similar results from them all. Smile.

Give everything a good stir with a large spoon, and continue to cook the beans and potatoes until they are done.

Mine cooked for an hour and a half to get to the point that I like them. Mama always "cooked them to death" as the old folk would say, but they sure were good.

Enjoy!

Serve them warm and enjoy one of the South's most favored side dishes.

Mama would have a bowl like this, sometimes with potatoes and sometimes without, sitting on that big oval dining room table every Sunday after church. Good times with all the family gathered around.