

# SOUTHERN GREEN BEANS RECIPE

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Try our step-by-step, recipe for making delicious Southern Green Beans. It's just good old, basic Southern Cooking at it's best, for a delicious side dish that compliments any meal. Whether you're using home canned beans, fresh, frozen or store bought in the can, it doesn't get much easier than this to place another vegetable on your family table.

As a Southerner, I was surprised to learn there are over 130 varieties of "green beans." I guess that may speak something about my upbringing huh? We had green beans on the table about every Sunday, and lots of other meals besides that. Of course, mama cooked the "real" green beans at our house. You know, the one's like I've got pictured here. Later on, we discovered those French Style Green Beans. Those were the one's where they took the time to cut the ends at an angle. You know the one's I'm talking about right? They tasted just like our regular green beans but it made you think about far away places yet unseen when you saw those fancy French cut beans in a bowl. Who knew cutting the ends of the green bean at an angle could cause such a difference?

Actually, truth be told (and I'm always about being truthful) we just called them "string beans" at our house. I've since learned that some folks also refer to them as "snap beans" or even "squeaky beans." It's said they call them squeaky beans because of the sound they make on your teeth as you chew them. But, enough of the educational part of our recipe.

Last year, I took a couple of canning classes with our local North Carolina Agricultural Extension Office. These places are a great source of information and when you run into problems with growing vegetables, or preparing and cooking vegetables, you just pick up the phone and give them a call. They're there to help you. I highly recommend you search out the office nearest you. They're every where it seems.

In one of the classes, we prepared and canned green beans. Each participant brought in fresh, washed and cut beans, that we packed into jars and placed inside a pressure canner for processing. I think the class was about \$8.00 and they provided the jars, lids, bands and even a very nice book on canning lots of other things. It was well worth the investment and a fun way to get to know some other folks, many of which were just learning how to can home goods for their families. Search them out, you want regret it.

I decided it was high time to open up the jar of green beans that I had processed in class. I mean after all, they had been looking good for almost an entire year now...why not see if they still tasted good. I'm glad to be able to share the results with you here.

You may not have any home canned beans to use right now but that's OK. You can use fresh, frozen or store bought canned beans. But, I do hope that one day you get to enjoy some that you have personally canned yourself. We've got various recipes here on Taste of Southern to help you learn the exciting process of home food preservation. It's a bit addictive though once you get started. I'm just warning you.

So, if you're ready to cook up a delicious side dish to your next family meal...grab some green beans...and Let's Get Cooking!

## Southern Green Beans Recipe:

**Green Beans Recipe:** You'll need just a few ingredients. (Isn't that jar I prepared pretty?)

We'll begin by slicing up a little bit of side meat. Cut it into a couple of 1/2 inch thick slices.

You could certainly use some other things to season the meat if you don't have any side meat on hand. Bacon, bacon grease, ham hock or a piece of fatback will work just as well. It's a matter of taste of course, and all these cuts of pork add just a little different taste to the finished recipe. And, if adding the pork isn't your thing, try cooking the beans in chicken stock. The beans are versatile and a great way to explore what your family will like best. Start with the basics and get creative as you go.

Mama always used a big thick hunk of fatback in her vegetables. She'd slice through the fat part and stop when she got to the outer skin layer, much like what I've done with the side meat I'm using in the photo above.

Those big thick hunks of fatback are really hard to find these days. I mentioned this to my older brother the other day and he says, it's because pigs are raised to be much leaner now, and that has eliminated the large pieces of fat or fatback. My brother spent his working career in the grocery store business and he just knows important stuff like that. You've just gotta love the wisdom of an older brother right? Anyway, about the only way to get those big thick slices of fatback is if you know a local farmer that raises pigs for his own families use. They tend to fatten them up a bit more. Pork Knowledge...it's a wonderful thing isn't it?

Place the piece of sliced side meat in a medium sized stock pot over medium heat on your stove. Once it starts to sizzle, turn the heat down a bit so the pork doesn't cook too fast and burn. It will only take a few minutes to see the white or fat of the meat start to become translucent. We want to render down some of the fat in the side meat to use for the beans.

I always suggest that you drain the water off of any home canned green beans you might be using.

~~The same goes for store bought. Just remove the lid and pour them into a colander. Give them a quick rinse with a little cold water and let them drain for a minute or two while the pork is heating up in that sauce pot.~~

Draining off the liquid is probably even more important if you're using store bought canned beans. If I'm using frozen beans, I'll generally rinse them off as well to remove any ice crystals that might have formed inside the bag. It's a personal preference that I think you'll see will improve the taste of your finished beans.

The side meat has browned a bit around the edges and the fat is starting to lose it's solid white color and appear more translucent. We've now fried down the side meat some and rendered off a couple of tablespoons of fat for seasoning. You could let the meat cook a little longer and remove it completely from the pan if you prefer a little crunchier texture to the fat of the side meat. Just chop it up and add it to the fully cooked beans. Or, leave it in the sauce pot as the beans cook....the choice is yours.

Pour a couple of cups of warm water into the sauce pot.

Add the beans.

Add the sugar. I've mentioned it before but mama added a little sugar to just about everything she cooked. I came by it naturally.

Add the Black Pepper.

Add the salt.

Give it all a good stir. You might also need to adjust the amount of water in the sauce pot. You need enough liquid to cover the beans about an inch or so. This liquid is going to evaporate and cook down over the length of time it will take to cook the beans. You just don't want to come back later and find all the liquid has disappeared from the pot. Of course, you can still add some more later if you see they need it.

Bring the beans up to a slight boil, then cover the pot. REDUCE the heat down to about medium-low and just let them cook at a slow simmer until they are done to your liking. Some folks prefer to cook

the beans down until they're very soft, almost mushy soft. Some folks prefer a bit more of a "bite" to the texture. Again, the choice is yours as there is no right or wrong....unless you're a die hard Southerner. Most of our parents always cooked them way down until they were very soft.

It will take the beans about 45 minutes to cook, maybe a little longer depending on the temperature you have them set on. After about 30 minutes, start taste testing a bean or two to see how they are progressing. You'll also want to see if they need a bit more salt or even a little more liquid at this point, and add either one if they need it. Continue to taste them about every 10 minutes until they reach the point that you want them.

Remove from heat and keep covered until ready to serve.

Serve them warm...and Enjoy!