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## Pulses—popular as ever

Pulses, also known as legumes, include chickpeas, lentils, beans, peas, soybeans, and even peanuts, are known to have been cultivated worldwide for thousands of years. In Europe, they have long been a classic ingredient in traditional dishes, especially hearty stews. Consequently, as popular tastes began increasingly to veer away from filling dishes of this kind, pulses began to feature less and less as part of our daily diet. However, the past few years have—quite rightly—seen pulses experience something of a comeback. No longer confined to heavy stews, they are now an increasingly popular ingredient in salads, spreads, delicious curries, and even soups. Thanks to the huge range of dried beans, peas, lentils, and chickpeas available on today’s supermarket shelves, pulses are now readily available and offer plenty of variety. As an alternative to dried pulses, which need a lot of soaking and lengthy cooking before use (see p. 12), they are also available canned and ready-cooked, or, in the case of green beans and peas, fresh or frozen. The choice is considerable and includes something to suit everyone’s taste.

Surpassed only by daisies and orchids, legumes constitute the third largest family of flowering plants worldwide, numbering around 700 genera and 18,000 species. They are also one of the most important cultivated plants with approximately 150 million tons being grown each year throughout the world. No one knows for sure precisely where they originated, but Asia, the Near East, and Latin America are thought to be the most probable sources. It is likely that several species developed more or less simultaneously in different regions. Archeological finds show that peas, for example, were already being cultivated in Europe as long ago as 4,500 BC. Chickpeas, the name of which is derived from the Latin “cicer” [pea], are believed to have been cultivated in the Near East and Southeast Asia as far back as 10,000 BC and to have spread from there to Mexico. Nor must we forget the Ancient Egyptians in this respect: they were already growing lentils about 7,000 years ago. Nowadays, most cultivation areas are found in Africa, Asia, North, and South, America. From here, they are exported all over the world and are an important element in the world’s food supply especially in poorer regions of the world.

## Hot and spicy chickpea and pumpkin spread

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Please note: Dried chickpeas must be left to soak overnight.

¾ cup/150 g dried chickpeas  
7 oz wedge/200 g Hokkaido pumpkin  
2 garlic cloves  
1 tsp chili oil  
1 tsp harissa (hot seasoning paste)  
salt

Cover the chickpeas with water and leave to soak overnight.

Next day, drain the chickpeas and bring to a boil in fresh water. Cover and cook over a low heat for about 60 minutes until soft. Drain and set aside to cool.

Pre-heat the oven to 325 °F (160 °C). Remove the seeds from the Hokkaido pumpkin, then slice or cut into large chunks. There is no need to remove the peel which is edible. In an ovenproof pan, bake the pumpkin pieces until tender, then set aside to cool. Peel and finely slice the garlic cloves. Warm the chili oil in a small skillet, stir in the garlic and sweat for at least 15 minutes.

Reserve a few chickpeas for decoration, then place the remaining chickpeas, pumpkin, and garlic oil mixture in a tall container and purée all the ingredients smoothly with a stick blender. Season to taste with salt and harissa, transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with the reserved chickpeas.



## Pea soup with green curry

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### Serves 4

2 shallots  
2 tbsp olive oil  
2 tsp green curry paste  
1 quart/1 liter vegetable stock  
3¾ cups/500 g frozen peas  
bunch of fresh mint  
½ cup/100 g heavy or whipping cream  
salt, and freshly milled black pepper

Peel and finely dice the shallots, then sweat in the oil until translucent. Stir in the curry paste and continue to brown for a few minutes before adding the stock. Cook gently for another 5 minutes.

Add the peas, then simmer for a further 5–6 minutes. Wash the mint, shake dry, and roughly chop. Add to the soup, then, using a hand-held processor, purée all the ingredients until absolutely smooth.

Strain the soup through a fine sieve, thoroughly pressing as much liquid as possible out of the residue. Stir in the cream and season to taste with salt and pepper.



## Chili sin carne

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### Serves 4

3¼ cups/750 ml vegetable stock  
4 oz/125 g soy mince [TVP]  
about 3 medium/300 g waxy potatoes  
1 onion  
2 garlic cloves  
1–2 chiles  
2 tbsp olive oil  
1 tbsp tomato paste  
pinch of cinnamon  
½ tsp cocoa powder, unsweetened  
1 tbsp sweet paprika powder  
1 tsp smoked paprika powder  
sprig of fresh thyme  
sprig of fresh marjoram  
1 can kidney beans  
1 red bell pepper  
3 scallions  
salt, pepper

Bring the vegetable stock to a boil and cook the soy mince for 5 minutes. Remove from the hob and leave to stand in the liquid until ready to use.

Peel and dice the potatoes and onion. Peel the garlic cloves, remove the green core, and roughly chop. Wash and chop the chile, and strip off the thyme and marjoram leaves.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan, then brown the onion and garlic. Add the diced potato and tomato paste and fry briefly.

Stir in the cinnamon, cocoa powder, both types of paprika powder, herbs, soy mince, and stock. Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes.

Next, add the kidney beans (along with their canning juice if desired) and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, clean and dice the red bell pepper. Add to the chili mixture a short while before the chili is ready. Season with salt and pepper.

Clean the scallions, slice into rings, then sprinkle over the chili just before serving.



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## Abbreviations and Quantities

1 oz = 1 ounce = 28 grams

1 lb = 1 pound = 16 ounces

1 cup = approx. 5–8 ounces\* [see below]

1 cup = 8 fluid ounces = 250 milliliters [liquids]

2 cups = 1 pint [liquids] = 500 milliliters [liquids]

8 pints = 4 quarts = 1 gallon [liquids]

1 g = 1 gram = 1/1000 kilogram = 5 ml [liquids]

1 kg = 1 kilogram = 1000 grams = 2¼ lb

1 l = 1 liter = 1000 milliliters [ml] = 1 quart

125 milliliters [ml] = approx. 8 tablespoons = ½ cup

1 tbsp = 1 level tablespoon = 15–20 g\* [depending on density] = 15 milliliters [liquids]

1 tsp = 1 level teaspoon = 3–5 g\* [depending on density] = 5 ml [liquids]

\*The weight of dry ingredients varies significantly depending on the density factor, e.g. 1 cup of flour weighs less than 1 cup of butter. Quantities in ingredients have been rounded up or down for convenience, where appropriate. Metric conversions may therefore not correspond exactly. It is important to use either American or metric measurements within a recipe.

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