

GARBANZO BEANS



Yuma County is home to almost 200 acres of garbanzo beans, and are part of the dry legume cropping schemes in the region. They are typically harvested during the late spring and summer.

Chickpea and garbanzo bean are 2 names for the same thing (*Cicer arietinum*) a member of the Pea family (Fabaceae). They are also called ceci (Italy), Egyptian pea, gram, Kichererbse (Germany), and revithia (Greece).

Garbanzo is the name used in Spanish speaking countries. The English name garbanzo bean comes from the French chiche, which comes from the Latin cicer.

Garbanzo Beans are the most widely consumed legume in the world. Originating in the Middle East, they have a firm texture with a flavor somewhere between chestnuts and walnuts. Here in the Yuma area, garbanzo beans are usually pale yellow in color, while in India there are red, black, and brown garbanzo beans.

Garbanzos grow roughly 2 feet tall and have small feathery leaves on both sides of the stem. One seed-pod contains 2-3 peas. Garbanzo flowers are white or reddish blue.

Several dozen distinct garbanzo bean varieties are cultivated. European varieties are large (typically around 1/2 inch in diameter) and most commonly pale yellow. There were several other varieties, with black and reddish seeds that are rarely grown today. The black variety was mainly used as cattle feed. Asian varieties are smaller (typically 1/4 inch) and dark brown in color.

The garbanzo bean is not known in a wild state. It is grown in the Mediterranean, western Asia and India. In India the plants are eaten as salad as well.

Garbanzo beans can be eaten in salads, cooked in stews, ground into a flour called gram flour (also known as besan, and used in Indian cuisine), ground and shaped in balls and fried as falafel, cooked and ground into a paste called hummus, or roasted and spiced and eaten as a snack. The plant can also be eaten as a green vegetable.

In classical Greece, they were eaten both as a staple and as dessert, raw when young. The Romans knew several varieties known, for example venus-, ram- and punic garbanzo beans. They were eaten as a broth and roasted as a snack.

Garbanzo beans were grown in some areas of Germany up to first World War, afterwards they were ground and used as a coffee.

It has been suggested (among other explanations) that the chickenpox disease gets its name from chick peas (garbanzo beans), which resembled the chickenpox blisters that appeared on the skin.

The legume is a plant of the family Fabaceae, and the term legume can refer to the plant itself, or the seeds of the plant which grow in the plant's pods. Legumes help fix nitrogen in the soil,

so they are often used in crop rotation to replenish nitrogen deficient soil instead of using chemicals or fertilizer. Some common legumes are beans, peas, alfalfa, clover, and peanuts. Legumes are an extremely versatile food full of important nutrients and vitamins, and are the base for many tasty dishes.

Unripe garbanzo beans are often picked out of the pod and eaten as a raw snack and the leaves are eaten as a green vegetable in salads. Garbanzo bean flour is also used to make "Burmese tofu" which was first known among the Shan people of Burma. The flour is used as a batter to coat various vegetables and meats before frying, such as a garbanzo bean fritter from Sicily. Garbanzo bean flour is also used to make the Mediterranean flatbread socca.

In the Philippines garbanzo beans preserved in syrup are eaten as sweets and in desserts such as halo-halo. Ashkenazi Jews traditionally serve whole garbanzo beans at a Shalom Zachar celebration for baby boys.

Dried chick peas need a long cooking time (1–2 hours) but will not easily fall apart when cooked longer. If soaked for 12–24 hours before use, cooking time can be considerably shortened (30 mins).

Raw Garbanzo beans contain protease (enzyme that breaks down proteins) inhibitors which counteract the enzymes in our body that digest protein.

Mature garbanzo beans can be cooked and eaten cold in salads, cooked in stews, ground into a flour called gram flour (also known as besan and used primarily in Indian cuisine), ground and shaped in balls and fried as falafel, fermented to make an alcoholic drink similar to sake, stirred into a batter and baked to make farinata, cooked and ground into a paste called hummus or roasted, spiced and eaten as a snack.

Garbanzo beans are high in protein, folate, magnesium, potassium, and iron, and contain very little fat and no cholesterol. They are also high in fiber and offer compounds such as phytochemicals and isoflavones that can prevent chronic diseases. They are a very healthy food and a great source of fuel for the body. Research has shown a direct connection between the consumption of legumes and lower LDL cholesterol, lower incidence of certain cancers, improved health in diabetics, menopause relief, and weight loss.

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