

Beans, pulses and legumes have important role in nutrition

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Beans, pulses and legumes can be classified as either vegetables or proteins under the new USDA dietary guidelines, giving them an important role in a person's daily diet, an expert panel said at the Institute of Food Technologists' Wellness 12 meeting.

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which highlights the messages behind the MyPlate food icon, recommend half a person's plate be vegetables and fruit, the other half grains and protein, and a serving of dairy be included with the meal. In the guidelines, beans, pulses and legumes are permitted to go on either side of the plate, although not both, at each meal. This does not include green beans, which are grouped with other vegetables.

During Wednesday's panel, Joanne Slavin, PhD., RD, professor at the University of Minnesota and a member of the committee that wrote the [guidelines](#), said beans, pulses and legumes are a good source of protein, fiber and nutrients such as potassium and [folate](#). However, most Americans do not get nearly enough of them in their diets, and when they do report eating beans, the most common form is refried.

"It's an exciting time, with the huge emphasis on plant products as a healthier way to eat," Slavin said. "There are lots of opportunities to increase consumption."

Brian Larson, Ph.D., vice president of research and development for JG Consulting Services, LLC, gave examples of how specialty grain

legumes, such as sweet white lupin, pigeon peas and heirloom/heritage beans, could add [nutritional value](#) to bakery products and frozen waffles and pancakes, as well as act as a meat substitute, a soup thickening and fortification agent and act as a potato substitute or side dish in frozen entrees.

These specialty grains add protein, resistant carbohydrates and healthy fiber without adding gluten, he said.

Provided by Institute of Food Science & Technology

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