

Three Bean Chili Mix Gift Jar

Complete Instructions, Substitutions & Alternate Ideas

INTRODUCTION

This Three Bean Chili Mix Gift Jar makes a thoughtful, budget-friendly gift that's as beautiful as it is practical. Layer dried beans and aromatic spices in a mason jar, attach a recipe card, and you've created a gift that delivers a comforting homemade meal perfect for family dinners.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE JAR

You will need the following to create each gift jar:

- 1 quart (32-ounce) wide-mouth mason jar with lid
- 1 cup dried kidney beans
- 1 cup dried pinto beans
- 1 cup dried black beans
- 2 tablespoons dried minced onion
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- ¼ cup chili powder
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional for mild, increase for spicy)
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- Printable recipe card and ribbon or twine for decoration

ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Prepare Spice Mixtures

Before layering, combine spices in three separate small bowls for easier assembly:

- Mixture 1: Combine 2 tablespoons dried minced onion + 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- Mixture 2: Mix ¼ cup chili powder + ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper (adjust for heat preference)
- Mixture 3: Combine 2 tablespoons dried parsley + 1 tablespoon dried oregano

Step 2: Layer Ingredients in Jar

Layer ingredients in this specific order, pressing down firmly after each layer to prevent shifting:

1. Kidney beans (1 cup) - press down firmly
2. Onion & garlic mixture - spread evenly
3. Pinto beans (1 cup) - press down firmly
4. Black beans (1 cup) - press down firmly
5. Chili powder & cayenne mixture - spread evenly
6. Parsley & oregano mixture - spread evenly
7. Ground cumin (2 tablespoons) - final layer

Step 3: Fill and Seal

IMPORTANT: There will likely be empty space between the cumin and jar lid. To prevent ingredients from shifting, add 2-3 tablespoons of extra beans OR place a small piece of crumpled paper towel at the top (hidden by lid). This keeps layers intact during transport.

Seal jar tightly and attach recipe card with ribbon or twine.

INGREDIENTS RECIPIENT WILL NEED

Include this list on the recipe card you attach to the jar:

- 2 pounds ground beef or ground turkey
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 3 quarts (12 cups) water or beef stock
- 2 (28-ounce) cans diced tomatoes
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional toppings: shredded cheese, sour cream, green onions, cornbread

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS FOR RECIPIENT

Method 1: Stovetop (Traditional)

1. In large pot or Dutch oven, brown 2 pounds ground meat over medium-high heat; drain fat
2. Set meat aside; in same pot, sauté diced onion in 1 tablespoon oil until softened (5 minutes)
3. Return meat to pot; add entire jar contents (beans and spices) directly to pot
4. Add 3 quarts water or stock, 2 cans diced tomatoes, and tomato paste
5. Bring to a full rolling boil and boil hard for 30 minutes (required for dried kidney beans)
6. Reduce to a simmer; cook 2-2½ hours, stirring occasionally, until beans are tender
7. Add water if chili becomes too thick
8. Season with salt and pepper to taste; serve hot with desired toppings

Method 2: Slow Cooker

1. Brown meat and sauté onion as directed above
2. Add entire jar contents, water/stock, tomatoes, and tomato paste to the pot
3. Bring to a full rolling boil on the STOVETOP and boil hard 30 minutes (do not skip)
4. Transfer to a 7-quart or larger slow cooker; cook on HIGH 4-6 hours until beans are tender
5. Season with salt and pepper; serve hot

Method 3: Instant Pot

1. Use sauté function to brown meat and cook onion
2. Add entire jar contents and only 2 quarts water/stock; pour tomatoes and paste on top
3. Lock lid and cook on HIGH pressure for 45 minutes (8-quart pot; too full for a 6-quart)

4. Allow a full natural pressure release (do not quick release)
5. Check that beans are tender; season with salt and pepper and serve hot

INGREDIENT SUBSTITUTIONS

Bean Substitutions

You can substitute any combination of dried beans while maintaining 3 cups total:

- Great Northern beans - milder, creamy flavor
- Navy beans - smaller, creamier texture
- Cranberry beans - slightly sweet, holds shape well
- Small red beans - similar to kidney beans
- Cannellini beans - large white beans, creamy
- Add ¼ cup dried lentils for extra protein (reduce other beans accordingly)

Spice Level Adjustments

Heat Level	Chili Powder	Cayenne	Optional Add-ins
Mild	3 tablespoons	Omit	Add 1 tsp sugar
Medium (as written)	¼ cup	⅛ teaspoon	Perfect as is
Spicy	¼ cup	¼ teaspoon	Add 1 Tbsp red pepper flakes
Extra Spicy	⅓ cup	½ teaspoon	Add 1 dried chili pepper

Protein Substitutions

- Ground turkey (leaner option)
- Ground chicken (mild flavor)
- Ground pork or pork sausage (richer flavor)
- Diced beef chuck (add extra 30 minutes cooking time)
- Vegetarian: Omit meat entirely or use plant-based ground meat
- Vegan: Use vegetable stock instead of beef stock

ALTERNATE IDEAS & VARIATIONS

Flavor Variations

- Smoky Chili: Add 1 tablespoon smoked paprika to spice mixture
- Southwest Style: Add 1 tablespoon dried cilantro and 1 teaspoon lime zest powder
- Cincinnati-Style: Add 1 cinnamon stick and ½ teaspoon cocoa powder to jar
- White Chili: Use only white beans (Great Northern, navy, cannellini)
- Texas-Style: Use only pinto beans and increase chili powder to ⅓ cup

Presentation Ideas

- Use fabric jar toppers in seasonal colors (cut 6-inch circle, secure with ring) • Tie with raffia, burlap ribbon, or red/white baker's twine • Add small wooden spoon tied to jar with twine • Include small bottle of hot sauce as companion gift • Package with cornbread mix for complete meal gift • Create gift basket with jar, serving bowls, and crackers • Add personalized tag with recipient's name and your signature

Recipe Card Enhancements

- Laminate recipe cards for durability and reuse
- Print on cardstock in seasonal colors
- Include your name as 'Recipe from [Your Name]'
- Add serving suggestions (cornbread, crackers, tortilla chips)
- Include storage tip: 'Assembled jar keeps 6 months in cool, dry place'
- Note freezer-friendly: 'Cooked chili freezes beautifully for 3 months'

STORAGE & HELPFUL TIPS

Storage Guidelines

- **Assembled jars:** Store up to 6 months in cool, dry place away from direct sunlight
- **Ensure tight seal:** Check lid is secured properly to prevent moisture entry
- **Cooked chili:** Refrigerate in airtight container for 4-5 days
- **Freezing:** Cool completely, portion into freezer bags, freeze up to 3 months
- **Reheating:** Thaw overnight in refrigerator; reheat on stovetop or microwave

Assembly Tips

- Press down FIRMLY after each layer to prevent shifting
- Wide-mouth jars are easier to fill and look more professional
- Make assembly easier by using funnel for spice layers
- Work over parchment paper to catch spills during layering
- If beans settle, gently shake jar before sealing to redistribute
- Clean jar rim before sealing for best presentation

Cooking Tips for Best Results

- Browning meat well adds depth of flavor - don't rush this step
- Stir occasionally during simmering to prevent sticking
- If chili is too thick, add water ½ cup at a time
- If too thin, simmer uncovered for last 30 minutes
- Chili tastes even better the next day as flavors develop
- Season with salt AFTER cooking - salt can toughen beans if added too early

SERVING SUGGESTIONS

Classic Toppings

- Shredded cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese
- Sour cream or Greek yogurt
- Diced green onions or chives
- Fresh cilantro
- Diced avocado or guacamole
- Tortilla strips or crushed Fritos
- Jalapeño slices

- Squeeze of fresh lime juice

Serve With

- Cornbread or cornbread muffins
- Saltine crackers or oyster crackers
- Warm flour tortillas
- Mexican rice or cilantro lime rice
- Simple green salad with lime vinaigrette
- Tortilla chips and salsa

PERFECT GIFTING OCCASIONS

- Holiday gifts for teachers, coaches, mail carriers
- Housewarming presents for new homeowners
- Thank you gifts for neighbors, babysitters, volunteers
- Care packages for college students
- New parent meals (they just add protein and heat)
- Get well gifts for families dealing with illness
- Wedding or bridal shower favors (make in smaller jars)
- Hostess gifts when attending parties
- Secret Santa or white elephant gifts
- 'Just because' gifts to brighten someone's day

FINAL THOUGHTS

This Three Bean Chili Mix Gift Jar combines thoughtfulness with practicality. The layered appearance makes it beautiful enough to display, while the hearty meal it produces will warm hearts and fill bellies. It's a gift that shows you care while respecting your budget and the recipient's time. Whether you're making one jar for a special person or assembling dozens for holiday giving, this project delivers impressive results with minimal effort.

From the kitchen of Marathons and Motivation