

# What is a cook mix- and why must I feed it to my parrot?

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A cook mix is a combination of dried peas, beans, lentils (legumes) and grains soaked and then boiled / baked for a few minutes. A cook mix can be prepared and frozen in smaller portions and then easily defrosted to feed to your parrots. It is a great food source to feed, particularly during colder winter months, as it contains more calories than chop, and can help keep your little feathered friend good and warm. Add fresh chopped veggies and fruit to it daily to provide variety.

You can use pre-mix cooking mixes, soup mixes or make your own mix from dried beans, peas, lentils and grains you can easily find in the health food section of your grocery store. (See list below for parrot safe legumes) **Never feed canned beans as these contain high levels of sodium and sulphates used for the preparation and preservation process.**

## Parrot safe Legumes (Beans/Peas/Lentils)

BEANS (Legumes)	Rich in:
Adzuki/ Red Mung	Protein, magnesium, potassium, iron, zinc, copper, manganese and vit. B3, potassium
Black Eyed	Vit A, B6, C. Calcium, Magnesium, Iron.
Butter	Potassium, Protein, Iron and Calcium
Chick Peas/ Garbanzo	Folate, Vit E, Potassium, Iron, Manganese, Copper, Zinc and Calcium
Green Peas	Vit A, Vit K, Vit C, Thiamine, Folate, Manganese, Iron, Phosphorous.
Lentils	Iron, Protein and Folic Acid
Lima	Potassium, Thiamine and Niacin
Maple Peas / Carlin Peas	Protein, Fibre, Manganese, Molybdenum, B Vitamins, Anthocyanins.
Mung/ China Peas	Protein, vit B6, C, K, Riboflavin, Folate, Copper, Manganese, Protein, Thiamine, Niacin, Pantothenic Acid, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus and Potassium Amino Acids,
Pinto	Protein, Iron, Potassium, Selenium and Folate
Soy	Protein, Amino Acids, Calcium, Folic Acid and Iron
Navy Bean	Potassium, Protein, Iron and Calcium
Yellow Peas	Vit A, Vit K, Vit C, Thiamine, Folate, Manganese, Iron, Phosphorous.



Mo and Pickle Grobler diving into their Parrotainment Cooking Mix.  
Photo Credit: Riethe Grobler.

**Why are legumes so good for parrots?** They are high in soluble fibre which helps prevent digestive disorders. Legumes can assist in keeping blood-sugar levels stable. It lowers cholesterol and thus lowers heart disease risk. A great food to feed parrots that have sensitivities to processed and fortified foods such as Eclectus parrots and parrots that tend to pluck/ over preen their feathers. Legumes contain plant- protein so it is easier on the kidneys.

**\*Note:** Large raw beans such as lima, pinto and soy should be thoroughly soaked and cooked before feeding to parrots. These beans are not recommended for sprouting.

**Why must I soak dried legumes?** Certain uncooked dried beans contain enzyme inhibitors that make them indigestible. Dried beans can make a parrot very ill if eaten.

Soaking and then cooking dried legumes breaks down these enzyme inhibitors making them digestible. It is therefore recommended to always soak and cook all dried beans before feeding to parrots.

Always rinse dried legumes well after soaking and before cooking. Rinse again after cooking.



Photo Credit: Rawpixel

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Grains is a term normally given to edible grass seeds, although there are a few non-grass grains. Grains can be added to a cooking mix to add more variety. Grains can be fed raw or cooked to your parrot. You can add cooked grains to your parrots' soaked beans to add a bigger variety and increase your nutrient profile.

**Why grains?** In the wild parrots forage and feed on a number of grass seeds as well as other food sources. We have to try and keep their diet as close as possible to what they will feed on in the wild.

Grains are good in that they consist of complex carbohydrates. These are nutrients that take a while to digest– thus providing energy to your parrot over a long period.

Most of these products come with cooking instructions, but for some of the lesser known grains here are a few instructions:

**Buckwheat groats:** Use 2 measures water to 1 measure buckwheat groats. Boil, cover and let simmer for 20 minutes.

**Bulgar:** Use 2 measures water to 1 measure buckwheat groats. Boil, lower heat and let simmer for 25 minutes.

**Pearled Barley:** Use 2 measures water to 1 measure pearled barley. Boil, cover and cook for 35-40 minutes.

**Wheat Berries:** Soak overnight and boil in soaking water for one hour or cook covered until the wheat is soft, adding water if necessary.

**Quinoa:** Use 2 measures water to 1 measure quinoa. Boil, cover and cook for 15 minutes. Leave it off heat for another 10 minutes.

**Millet:** Use 2 measures water to 1 measure quinoa. Boil, lower heat and cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Leave off heat for 10 or more minutes.

**Sorghum:** Sorghum should never be soaked for a long period or boiled as it releases cyanide when sprouted.

**Safflower seeds** when soaked and boiled become very bitter and the seed hull goes dark– so best to avoid in a cooking mix. Feed fresh instead.

**DID YOU KNOW?** In South Africa, Soya, Wheat and Maize are often sprayed with glyphosate containing chemicals. Parrots that pluck or over– preen their feathers, or which may have dietary sensitivities should not be fed any foods that may contain one or all three of these products in them. Parrotainment SA's own products are wheat, soy and maize free.

## Parrot safe Grains to cook

Grains	Rich in:
<b>Amaranth</b>	Protein, Amino Acids, Phosphorus, Potassium, Magnesium, Calcium, Iron and Vit C
<b>Barley</b>	Iron, Thiamin, Niacin, Phosphorus, Riboflavin and Protein
<b>Basmati Rice</b>	Carbohydrates, proteins, Low in fat and gluten, niacin and thiamine, iron.
<b>Brown Rice</b>	Protein and Iron
<b>Buckwheat groats</b>	Manganese, Amino Acids and Magnesium
<b>Bulgar Wheat</b>	Calcium, Iron, Thiamin, riboflavin, niacin.
<b>Couscous</b>	Protein, Iron and Vit A
<b>Kamut</b>	Protein, Amino Acids, Vit E, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Phosphorus, Magnesium, Zic, Pantothenic Acid and Copper
<b>Maize /Corn Dried</b>	Phosphor, Manganese, Fibre, Zinc, Copper, Magnesium.
<b>Millet</b>	Phosphor, iron, calcium, riboflavin
<b>Oats / Oats Groats</b>	Protein, Iron and Calcium
<b>Pasta –Assorted durum wheat.</b>	Niacin, Folic Acid, Iron, Thiamin, and Riboflavin
<b>Pasta– Assorted Gluten Free</b>	Niacin, Folic Acid, Iron, Thiamin, and Riboflavin, Iron, phosphor.
<b>Pastas– Whole Wheat</b>	Protein, Iron and Vit A
<b>Pastini</b>	Protein, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin, Folate and Iron
<b>Pearled Red Wheat</b>	Protein, Essential Fatty Acids, Calcium, Copper, Magnesium, Phosphor, Potassium, Selenium, Zinc, Vit
<b>Quinoa</b>	Phosphor, Iron, Protein and Riboflavin. Lysine, amino acids, calcium.
<b>Rye Berries</b>	Iron and Protein
<b>Spelt</b>	Manganese, Phosphorus, Niacin, Magnesium, Protein and Copper
<b>Wheat Berries</b>	Iron and Protein
<b>Whole Wheat Breads-</b>	Thiamin, Folic Acid, Iron and Niacin <b>* High in Sodium– feed in moderation</b>



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**PORTIONS TO FEED:** Feeding small amounts of many types of food gives your bird a better chance of obtaining the wide variety of nutrients it needs to sustain optimum health without it getting full on one type of food to the detriment of another. Rice and pasta are higher in fat, and should therefore be limited when added to a cook mix. When packaging your cook mix for freezing– look at using an ice-cube tray to get your portions. 1 Ice-cube portion of cooking mix is enough for a medium sized parrot like a Congo African Grey for a daily portion.

**TIPS FOR FEEDING COOK MIX:** Get all your ingredients together and soak all your legumes first. You can either freeze your mix after it has been soaked, or you can package and freeze it after you have cooked it.

## SOME RECIPE IDEAS:



Photo Credit: Parrotainment SA

Soaked overnight in plain water , rinsed and cooked on stove for 20min and rinsed again.

- Chick Peas /Garbanzo Beans
- Dried Green Peas
- Dried Yellow Peas
- Dried Maple Peas
- Mung Beans / China Peas
- Wild Rice (1/3 of portion of legumes)

Added to mix:

- Healthy Seed Mix
- Blue Berries
- Grapes (seed incl. Grapes are high in sugar– feed in moderation)
- Cucumber
- Green Pepper



Photo Credit: Anette Cartwright

Soaked overnight in plain water , rinsed and cooked on stove for 20min and rinsed again.

- Chick Peas /Garbanzo Beans
- Dried Kidney Beans
- Dried Maple Peas

Soaked and cooked:

- Quinoa

Sprouted:

- Mung beans
- Lentils

Added to mix:

- Healthy Seed Mix
- Grapes (seed incl. Grapes are high in sugar– feed in moderation)
- Peach (Pips removed)
- Strawberry
- Red Cabbage

**HOW DO I FEED IT TO MY PARROT:** We find many people give up after their first try with a cooking mix, particularly when their parrot was on a limited diet. To many parrots the texture is strange and new, but please– there is so many health benefits– keep trying. We have found some days our parrots like it cooked soft– we will then boil the mix for longer, and make it nice and mushy. Other days we vary it by cooking it for a shorter period of time. Some days we feed just a cook mix, other days we add a sprout mix, veggies, nuts, seeds, fruit, pellets to it. Remember always: **variety**. Just like little children, parrots too get tired with the same foods over and over.

There is no fixed recipes or set rules, be creative and change things around a bit!