

## Beans in your beef stew make it deliciously leaner

October 13, 2014 By: Melissa d'Arabian

Picture this: after a long day at the office (or at the kids' soccer field or wherever) you turn the key to open your front door and you are greeted by the heady aroma of a steamy meaty stew. You have been richly rewarded for spending mere minutes in the morning assembling dinner in your slow cooker.

Fall officially kicks off the season of soups, roasts and stews. And that means it's time to dig out your slow cooker. My favorite dish is an oldie but goodie - beef stew. But how to make a batch that satisfies without being too heavy? Enter today's star ingredient - the chickpea!

This delightful little legume is my secret for adding lots of lean protein and fiber to many dishes. It's hearty enough to hold its own alongside other proteins (so add it to soups, chilies and sautes). Or toss some chickpeas into salads or stir them into pasta dishes to boost the nutrition. You even can puree them and add a few creamy spoonfuls to brownie or muffin batters (not to mention make hummus).

And, did I mention how darned cheap these little guys are?

This beef stew with chickpeas is an earthy ode to fall - beef cubes briefly sauteed golden brown with turmeric, then simmered in red wine, beef stock, lemon zest and prunes (which add richness and just enough sweetness) in a relationship that can only be described as symbiotic. To reduce saturated fat, I use a leaner cut of meat and less of it. The filling chickpeas and plenty of veggies means you won't miss the extra meat.

I leave you with two final slow-cooker tips. For busy weekdays, consider prepping the ingredients and adding them to your slow-cooker insert the night before, then sticking it in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning, you just set the insert into the base, turn it on and walk away. Also, misting the insert with cooking spray before filling it makes cleanup way easier (and faster).

### **SLOW COOKER BEEF STEW WITH CHICKPEAS**

Start to finish: 4 or 8 hours (depending on slow cooker setting), plus 15 minutes prep

Servings: 4

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon ground turmeric  
Kosher salt and ground black pepper  
1 pound lean stew beef (such as top round), cut into 1-inch cubes  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped  
1/2 cup chopped pitted prunes  
2 medium carrots, roughly chopped  
1 medium zucchini, chopped  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon  
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger  
2 teaspoons minced fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried)  
1/3 cup red wine  
1 cup beef stock  
15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed



In a medium bowl, mix together the flour, turmeric and a hefty pinch each of salt and pepper. Add the beef cubes and toss to coat evenly.

In a large saute pan over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the beef and brown on all sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Set aside.

Coat a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray, then arrange the onion on the bottom and the beef over it. Add the remaining ingredients, then cover and cook until meat is tender, about 8 hours on low or 4 hours on high. Taste, then season with salt and pepper.

Nutrition information per serving: 450 calories; 110 calories from fat (24 percent of total calories); 12 g fat (3.5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 50 mg cholesterol; 51 g carbohydrate; 9 g fiber; 14 g sugar; 33 g protein; 800 mg sodium.