

THE CHICKPEA

Miss Congeniality?



If there were a beauty contest for beans, the chickpea would likely be crowned Miss Congeniality. A little lumpy and just shy of round, it isn't much to look at. But when judged on versatility, compatibility and all-around friendliness to cook with, the chickpea is a total winner.

recipes *Sandy Garson*
recipe photography *Benjamin Clay*

Also known as a garbanzo, it can make itself at home in almost any cuisine. And it's amenable to an infinite variety of pairing and cooking techniques. You can mash, grind, sauté or roast it, deep-fry it or toss it into salads, soups or braises. This bean isn't fussy at all.

But beyond personality is character. And this is a bean with integrity. Cook it for hours and it will never turn to mush. A whole chickpea will always remain so in shape, texture and nut-like, buttery taste.

For purists, the big chickpea question is to skin or not to skin. Some cooks swear that skinning the chickpea results in silkier hummus and clearer, prettier soups. Our recipes spare you that effort. Still, there's something meditative about grasping each chickpea between thumb and forefinger, squeezing it out of its skin and shooting the newly naked bean into a bowl.

—*Carolyn Swartz*