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The area I live in has a lot of agriculture nearby, so I didn't have to travel far to get local ingredients. I walked to a farmer's market about half a mile away and purchased most of my ingredients there with another PGCer, Maya. To cut down on what we had to purchase, we decided to share some ingredients, like onions and garlic. What I couldn't purchase there, I bought at a local grocery store which specialized in healthy, organic food. They had a section of bulk spices from [Frontier CoOp](#) in Iowa, so the spices didn't travel far from where they were produced. I also got organic dried black beans and lentils. Unfortunately, the beans, lentils, and spices were packaged in plastic, but packaging was minimal and I brought them home in a reusable bag.

I made a meal out of black beans, swiss chard, butternut squash, and lentils. Originally, I intended to mimic my mother's black bean and sweet potato dish, since sweet potatoes are in season, but I only saw squash at the farmer's market, so I settled for that instead.

I already had salt, pepper, and avocado oil spray at home, so I didn't have to buy that, but they were not sourced sustainably. The avocado oil was at least non-GMO and didn't contain aerosols.

Ingredient	Source	Price Total	Price per Serving (4)
1 butternut squash	Farmer's Market	\$4.00	\$1
1 bunch swiss chard	Farmer's Market	\$3.00	\$0.75
1 cup dried black beans	McNally's (local store)	\$4.00	\$0.50
1/3 cup dried lentils	McNally's	\$4.00	\$0.25
3 cloves garlic	Farmer's Market	\$3.00	\$0.25
1/2 white onion	Farmer's Market	\$2.00	\$0.25
3 tablespoons chili powder	McNally's	\$0.80	\$0.20
Avocado oil	Walmart	\$5.00	\$0.25
Salt and pepper	Several small packets collected from plastic utensil kits	\$0.00	\$0
	TOTAL	\$25.80	\$3.40

I had a significant amount of leftover avocado oil, dried lentils and beans, and garlic, which is why the total price is not proportional to the price per serving. I was surprised by how easy it was to stay on budget. Everything was organic except for the salt, pepper, and oil, and all of the produce was bought locally.

The meal was rather difficult to make. I found separate recipes for [cutting](#) and [baking butternut squash](#), [cooking lentils](#), and [making swiss chard](#), and put my own spin on a few of them (the bean recipe came from the back of the package). It took more time than I expected to prepare the butternut squash, and since I was unfamiliar with working with dried beans, I had no idea that they would take over an hour to cook. Individually, each section of the meal was very simple to complete, but all together, it was difficult. With all of the fresh ingredients and dried products, there was a lot going on at once. I had beans bubbling away in a pot while I was keeping an eye on the sweet potato in the oven, microwaving the lentils, and beginning to prepare the swiss chard. This all could also be due to my inexperience in cooking.

Overall, cooking this dinner helped me to better understand how eating healthy, sustainably sourced food is often put against the need for convenience and speed. However, taking the time to source my ingredients and cook the food made me appreciate it all the more.

Pictures below



Maya Flynn and I walked to the farmer's market together. I found my garlic, squash, and swiss chard at the farmer's market.



After soaking the black beans for 6 hours, I brought them to a simmer on the stove for an hour.



I chopped open and peeled the squash, then cut it into 1-inch cubes. I mixed the cubes with avocado oil, 2 tablespoons chili powder, 1 clove garlic, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of an onion and spread it out on a baking sheet. This went into the oven at 400 F for 30 minutes.

(Not pictured) I was running out of space on the stove, so I cooked the green lentils in the microwave by mixing $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of lentils with 1 cup of water and cooking it for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.



Last but not least, I cut the swiss chard up, sautéed $\frac{1}{4}$ onion and 3 cloves garlic for a minute, then added the chard and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water and sautéed for 5 minutes.



I drained the beans, tossed in the butternut squash and remaining chili powder, and we ate!



We set aside our plant-based scraps and we disposed of it in the college garden's compost bin, which according to the school's website, accepts small additions from students.



Maya and my friend who joined us in our dinner party kindly helped me clean up the huge mess I made. Leftovers were stashed in the fridge in reusable containers.

Hearty Beans and Squash

4 servings

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large butternut squash
- 1 cup dried black beans
- 1/2 white onion
- 2 cloves of garlic
- Avocado or olive oil
- 3 tbsp chili powder
- Salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Rinse and soak black beans for 6-8 hours.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
3. Drain black beans and place in a large saucepan with 5 cups of water. Bring to a simmer and maintain for 1 hour.
4. Peel and cut open the squash. Remove seeds. Chop into 1 inch cubes.
5. Mince onion and garlic.
6. Mix squash with 2 tbsp oil, 2 tbsp chili powder, onion, and garlic. Bake for 30 minutes. Flip over halfway through.
7. When beans are done, drain the water out from the pot. Mix in squash, remaining chili powder, and salt and pepper to taste.

RECIPE MODIFIED FROM INA GARTEN'S BUTTERNUT SQUASH RECIPE ON FOODNETWORK.COM

