

## **Green Beans with Toasted Pine Nuts and Bread Crumbs**

serves 6

This dish is a bit more complex than other Italian vegetable side dishes, but it still has a simple Italian elegance. Choose the freshest, youngest, most tender green beans for this dish.

**2 tsp. butter**  
**1/2 cup coarsely crumbled dried bread crumbs (if making your own, crumble a hearty bread, and dry in a 250° oven for 10–15 minutes)**  
**1/2 cup toasted pine nuts (toast in 350° oven until light brown)**

**1 lb. fresh tender green beans, stem end trimmed off**  
**1 T. olive oil**  
**3/4 tsp. salt**  
**2 T. grated parmesan, best quality you can afford**  
**1 T. fresh minced mint (optional)**  
**1 lemon**

Heat the butter in a small fry pan on medium heat. Add the bread crumbs and sauté until light brown, dry, and toasty. Set aside. Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil, add the beans, and blanch for 4 minutes. Drain, and transfer to a clean, dry towel to absorb the moisture. Heat the olive oil in a medium-large fry pan on medium-high heat. Add the beans, the bread crumbs, the pine nuts, and the salt. Sauté for 3–4 minutes, stirring often, until the beans are glistening and the flavors are assimilated. Add the parmesan and the mint (optional), stir, and remove from the heat. Serve immediately, squeezing a bit of lemon juice on each portion. If you add the lemon juice sooner, the beans will turn a drab military green. We love the vibrant, glistening green of fresh, lightly cooked beans!

For an interesting variation, prepare the bread crumbs, blanch the beans, and gently stir together the beans, bread crumbs, pine nuts, olive oil, salt, and parmesan and mint if desired, then roast in a 425° oven for 5 minutes. Squeeze on the lemon juice at the table. The flavors deepen and marry a bit more with the roasting treatment.

Serve with a high-protein side dish (frittata, fish, chicken) and a fresh, tender salad for a quick, delicious menu. In the summer months, serve with a platter of sliced heirloom tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, basil, olive oil, and a drizzle of balsamic for a summery treat.