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A bag labelled “mixed beans” is not yet a plan for kwati. Before it becomes a meal, somebody must establish what is inside, whether the beans are dry or already cooked, and which preparation instructions apply. For a Nepali household abroad, those practical questions can matter more than finding a packet with the familiar name.

Kwati is a soup of mixed sprouted beans associated with Nepal’s festival calendar. The Nepal Tourism Board connects it with Janai Purnima and the Kathmandu Valley Newar celebration it calls Gunhi Punhi. That cultural connection is worth keeping distinct from the claim that there is one universal shopping list or a single cooking time for every packet sold overseas.

This is a sourcing and preparation guide, not a kitchen-tested recipe. It brings published culinary references together with official food-safety advice, then sets out the decisions to make before cooking. It does not promise that a substitution will reproduce a family’s preferred flavour, or that sprouting at home can be made risk-free.

## Begin with a recipe, then inspect the ingredients

Chef Nepal’s published kwati recipe describes a nine-bean sprouted soup rooted in Newar tradition. Chef Suraj Pradhan’s version, published by World Vision, supplies another reference, with mixed beans and a seasoning list including ginger, garlic, cumin, coriander and turmeric. These are identifiable published versions, not evidence that every household uses the same mixture.

Choose one reliable recipe as a starting point rather than assembling an untested method from several short videos. Read it through before shopping. Does it identify the beans? Does it distinguish soaking from sprouting and cooking? Does it explain the appliance being used? A method that leaves those questions unanswered may need clarification before it is suitable for your ingredients.

Write the recipe’s ingredients beside the package labels you can actually buy. Keep the original names as well as the local shop’s names. If a seller cannot identify an ingredient, do not resolve the uncertainty by colour alone. Ask for a labelled product or use another clearly identified ingredient within an appropriately adapted recipe.

A useful shopping note has four columns: ingredient, form, package directions and intended use. “Kidney beans, dry” and “kidney beans, canned” belong on different lines. The distinction is more consequential than whether the packet looks familiar. Photographing the label for your own kitchen reference can help preserve instructions when an outer bag is discarded.

## Do not treat all mixed packets as interchangeable

A commercial soup mixture, a bag intended for sprouting and a ready-to-eat canned mixture may all contain beans, but they are not the same starting material. Follow the product’s actual directions and intended use. Do not assume that a dry bean mixture is ready to eat after a short soak, or that a recipe written for one mixture covers another.

If a Nepali or South Asian grocery stocks a labelled kwati mix, inspect that label with the same care. A familiar dish name does not remove the need to understand its ingredients, storage

instructions and preparation requirements. Nor does a long ingredient list establish quality by itself. Clarity is more useful than a claim of authenticity that cannot be checked.

For the first attempt with a new product, keep the packaging and record what you used. This is not an instruction to experiment with inadequate cooking. It is a way to distinguish a future flavour adjustment from a different ingredient or preparation method. If you later share the dish’s method with a relative, send the actual label rather than only a picture of the finished bowl.

The same habit of separating a process from a health claim is useful when reading about the fermentation behind gundruk’s sourness. Understanding what is happening to an ingredient is more helpful than assuming that a traditional process automatically makes every preparation safe.

## Sprouting is not a safety treatment

The attractive appearance of a sprout can obscure an important distinction: germination and safe preparation are separate matters. The US Food and Drug Administration warns that bacteria can be present in sprouting seeds and multiply during sprouting, even under clean conditions. Washing does not reliably remove contamination within the seed.

Its advice for pregnant people is to avoid raw sprouts, including mung-bean sprouts, and cook sprouts thoroughly. Home-grown

sprouts are not exempt from that concern. A clean jar, frequent rinsing or a fresh smell is not proof that sprouts are safe to eat raw. In a cooked kwati dish, the sprouting stage should never be mistaken for the cooking stage.

That warning should shape the plan before the beans are started, not appear as an afterthought at serving time. If the recipe’s sprouting method or the household’s ability to follow it is uncertain, choose a different, properly cooked bean preparation rather than improvising a promise of safety. A non-sprouted adaptation should be described honestly as an adaptation, not presented as identical to the traditional sprouted dish.

## Give dry kidney beans particular attention

Dry red kidney beans require care because of naturally occurring lectins. Health Canada’s specific instructions for dry red kidney beans are to soak them for at least five hours in water measuring two to three times the beans’ volume, discard that soaking water, then boil the pre-soaked beans vigorously for at least ten minutes. It warns against using slow cookers to cook dry red kidney beans because their temperatures are insufficient to destroy the lectins.

Those are safety instructions for that ingredient, not a complete kwati recipe or a guarantee that a whole mixed pot is ready after ten minutes. Continue to follow appropriate cooking instructions for the beans and recipe. Do not transfer a timing from a canned-

bean dish to a dry-bean mixture, or assume that sprouting has replaced the necessary heat treatment.

Health Canada also states that the heat used in canning adequately destroys lectins in canned red kidney beans. If you are not confident preparing dry kidney or soya beans, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust suggests using tinned versions. That can support a practical cooked-bean adaptation, although it changes the preparation and texture from a sprouted-bean recipe.

## Keep flavour choices separate from safety decisions

There are two different conversations to have about a bowl of kwati. One is culinary: which seasoning recalls the version you want, how thick you prefer it and what you serve alongside it. The other concerns ingredient identification, adequate cooking, allergies and storage. The first invites personal preference. The second should follow reliable instructions rather than nostalgia.

Before cooking for others, ask about dietary restrictions and check every packaged ingredient, including stock and seasoning blends. Keep the labels available rather than relying on a broad description such as “just beans”. If a guest needs a specific exclusion and the contents cannot be verified, offer a clearly identified alternative instead of guessing.

A family recipe can still be the centre of the meal. Ask the person sharing it to distinguish an ingredient name from a brand name, and a measured instruction from an estimate. Ask what changes when canned beans replace dry ones, or when a different appliance is used. Treat unanswered safety questions as questions, not as permission to fill in a plausible-sounding method.

## Plan the second meal before serving the first

A large pot creates a storage task as well as dinner. The UK Food Standards Agency advises cooling and refrigerating leftovers within two hours, eating them within 48 hours or freezing them, and reheating only once until steaming hot throughout. When reheating soup, stir so the whole portion heats rather than relying on a hot edge.

Choose a batch size that matches the people eating and the space available for safe storage. Set aside suitable containers before serving. Label stored portions so the cooking date does not have to be reconstructed from memory. The practical goal is to avoid making a generous pot that then sits out while everyone decides what to do with it.

None of this makes kwati less connected to home. It makes the connection more specific: a named recipe, identified ingredients, remembered preferences and a preparation method suited to the kitchen where it is being made. The most useful thing to carry

across borders is not an unexamined instruction to cook “as usual”. It is the knowledge needed to understand what usual meant.

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