

# JAYDEN'S **SECRET** INGREDIENT

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Méлина Mangal • Illustrated by Ken Daley



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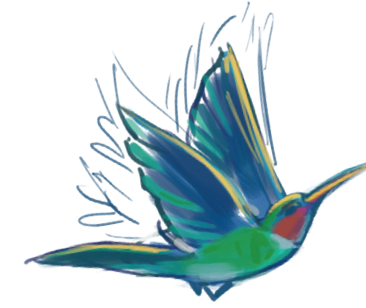
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For Mitali.

—MM

To my dad, Carl, a gardener at heart.

—Ken



Jayden watched a hummingbird sip nectar from the blossoms of the scarlet runner beans. He'd planted the vine with his neighbor Mr. Curtis, and it was growing strong.



"Morning, Jayden!" Mr. Curtis said as he entered the yard.

"Can you help me reach some beans?"

"Sure!" Jayden trotted over and started picking. "You want the flowers too?"



"We let the flowers be. They become beans."

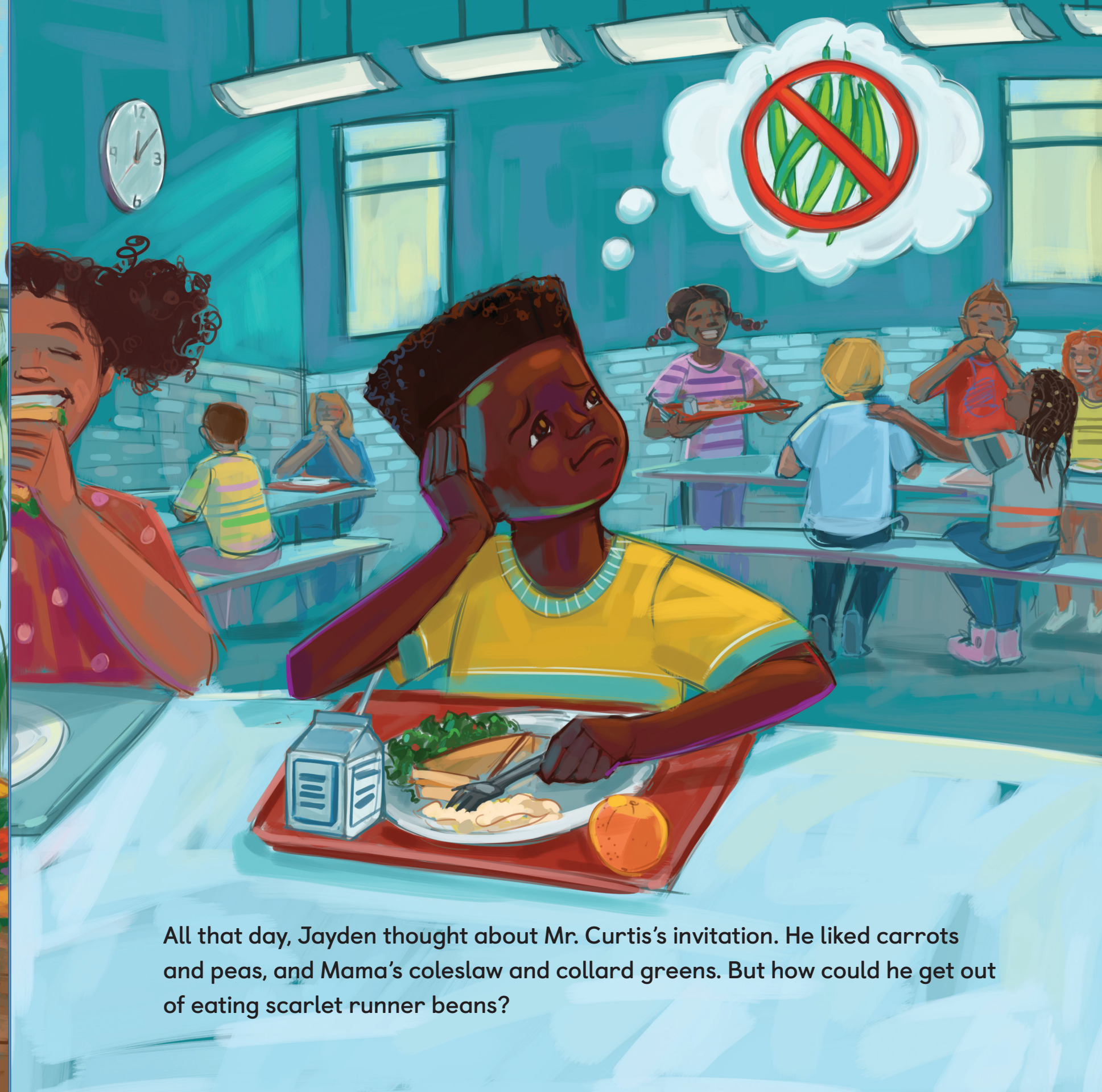
"What are you going to do with all these?" Jayden plucked some more and handed them to Mr. Curtis.



"Jayden, my boy, we're going to EAT them!"

"Not me. I don't like green beans."

Mr. Curtis shook his head. "You've never had *these*. Tell you what—come over Sunday and I'll show you how to cook the best beans in the world."



All that day, Jayden thought about Mr. Curtis's invitation. He liked carrots and peas, and Mama's coleslaw and collard greens. But how could he get out of eating scarlet runner beans?

## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

When I was a kid, I didn't particularly care for green beans. They were a disappointing dull green, unlike the bright picture on the can, and they were mushy. I still ate them, and I enjoyed them more than some other vegetables, but it wasn't until I was away at college that I first tasted fresh green beans. That was an experience I'll never forget. A whole new world had opened up to me—the world of fresh produce.

Like many kids, I was raised eating canned fruits and vegetables. They're often cheaper than fresh, and they keep for a long time on the shelf, which is especially convenient when you have a big family. In the Midwest where I grew up, fresh vegetables just weren't plentiful at the grocery stores in the winter months. And they were more expensive.

As Jayden learns, it takes time and work to grow vegetables you can eat. But the taste alone is worth it. Fresh vegetables are more flavorful and more nutritious. You can grow your own, starting out with just a few potted plants, as Jayden and Mr. Curtis do. Gardening is a fun activity, no matter what you grow.

There are also many other options for eating more fresh veggies, like going to a local farmer's market, joining a food co-op or community-supported agriculture (CSA) program, or simply

browsing through the fresh produce section at the grocery store. And if your school offers fresh fruits or veggies, try them. You might be surprised at what you like!

Wherever you get your vegetables, try preparing them in different ways. It's fun to discover what flavors you like best.

### Beautiful Beans

Scarlet runner beans are beautiful. In fact, so are bean plants in general. Bean plants produce flowers, which then become the bean pods you can eat as green beans. And most beans can be eaten dried too. If you leave the bean pods or green beans on the plant until they dry, you can collect the dried beans inside and eat them cooked. They keep longer this way, so you can grow beans in the summer and eat them all year round.

Beans are packed with protein, and you can eat cooked dried beans instead of meat as a source of this important nutrient. You need protein to build your muscles and stay strong. Beans also have other essential nutrients like iron, potassium, and zinc.

So whether you're eating beans fresh or dried, you can appreciate the many ways to enjoy them and the many ways they help your body!

## Recipes

In this story, Jayden discovers lots of ways to eat beans. He also finds out that everyone has different tastes. You can learn more about your own preferences by trying some of the recipes from Jayden's neighbors. Though Jayden and his neighbors used scarlet runner beans, you can use any type of green bean for these recipes. One thing to know is that cooking times for beans will vary depending on the type of beans, whether they're freshly picked, and even the pan you use. And of course, any beans can be cooked longer to match your preferences and taste. Have a grown-up help you, and enjoy preparing fresh beans together!

### MR. CURTIS'S BEANS

#### Ingredients

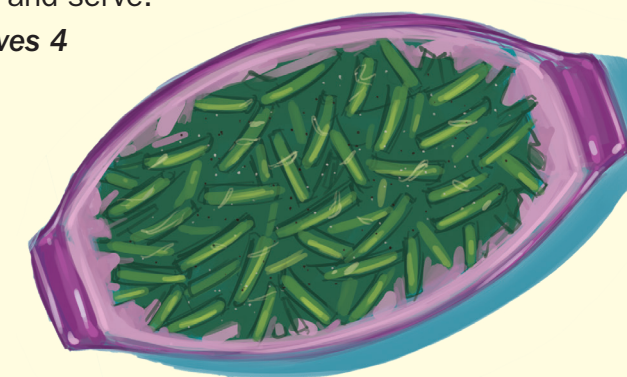
- 2 cups green beans, or 30–40 fresh-picked bean pods
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and black pepper to taste

#### Directions

1. Snap off the stem ends of the green beans and throw the ends away or compost them.
2. Put the bean pods in a colander and rinse them thoroughly in a clean kitchen sink.
3. Gently pat the beans dry with a clean kitchen towel.
4. Put the olive oil in a shallow skillet or frying pan on the stovetop.
5. Turn on the burner to medium-high.

6. Add the green beans to the pan and lightly toss with a large spoon, making sure the beans are coated in the oil.
7. Sauté the beans for about 5 minutes.
8. Turn off the stove and cover the pan with a lid.
9. Keep the pan covered on the stove and let the beans cook for about 10 minutes more, until they are tender but still bright green.
10. Add a little salt and black pepper to taste, and serve.

Serves 4



### MR. VU'S BEANS

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups green beans, or 30–40 fresh-picked bean pods
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- Chili flakes, to taste (optional)

#### Directions

1. Snap off the stem ends of the green beans and throw the ends away or compost them.