

Compositionality in question

a) beans

b) Spanish beans (intersection of bean-things with Spanish-things)

green beans, coffee beans, Egyptian beans,...

c) Spilling the Spanish beans

Spilling the Spanish Beans is an article, in two parts, by [George Orwell](#), that first appeared in the [New English Weekly](#) of 29 July and 2 September 1937.

'spilling the beans' about 'Spain'

(the Spanish Civil War,
the Communist repression of POUM)

« Cantando las verdades **sobre la guerra civil española** »
(in *Orwell en España*, pp. 251-259)

cantar las verdades (*figurative*) to speak one's mind

OED entry

b. to spill the beans : to reveal a secret. *slang* (orig. *U.S.*).

1919 T. K. HOLMES *Man from Tall Timber* xxviii. 355 ‘Mother certainly has spilled the beans!’ thought Stafford in vast amusement.

1921 R. D. PAINE *Comrades of Rolling Ocean* viii. 136 The beans are spilled, and that is what Maddigan guessed the moment he set eyes on you.

1928 *Daily Express* 10 Oct. 6 Spill the beans. Come clean on the whole game.

1929 E. LINKLATER *Poet's Pub* vii. 91 ‘Tell me the truth,’ she says. ‘Spill the beans, Holly, old man!’

1945 *Sun (Baltimore)* 28 Nov. 1/1 A Government publication in this country spilled the beans **concerning** our urgent interest in experiments with uranium.

1958 E. DUNDY *Dud Avocado* I. vi. 93 Spilling beans of shattering truths or equally shattering lies.

1966 D. VARADAY *Gara-Yaka's Domain* vii. 82 Wilson in an indulgent moment of weakness ‘spilt the beans’.

1979 G. HAMMOND *Dead Game* vii. 83 You asked me to trust you... So now I think you'd better spill the beans.

1982 *Listener* 23–30 Dec. 3/1 Julian Critchley spills the beans **about** El Vino and says why he likes it.