

“GOOD FOR YOU GRAINS” Breads, rice, Pasta

THE MAJOR NUTRIENTS IN GRAINS:

Grains supply us with a major source of energy with practically no fat. They also are rich sources of fiber, complex carbohydrates, B-vitamins, iron, and even some protein. They also contain something called phytochemicals, which include phytoestrogens which are very beneficial to your health. (See below for details.)

HOW GRAINS PROTECT OUR HEALTH:

Phytochemicals: are concentrated in the bran and the germ of whole grains and reduce our risk of heart disease and some cancers.

Phytoestrogens: are phytochemicals found in whole grains such as wheat and oats and help protect us by their antioxidant effect, their anticancer activity, as well as their cardiovascular effects: 1. they lower total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides. 2. aid in smooth muscle relaxation (your heart muscle), coronary artery dilation, and aid in the increase in the good cholesterol, HDL.

Fiber: *Insoluble* fiber helps to keep blood sugars more stable by not increasing blood sugar like white refined grains (i.e. white flour). This may be beneficial in the treatment of diabetes. It also helps to keep us regular and may help prevent some cancers. *Soluble* fiber found in oats has shown to lower LDL-cholesterol. This may be beneficial in the treatment of cardiovascular disease. (Remember to increase fiber gradually and drink plenty of water to prevent any gastrointestinal symptoms.)

SOME DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF GRAINS:

Grains are wholesome, delicious, economical, and versatile. While most of these grains seem unfamiliar to you, but please see the recipes that involve a variety of these grains and don't be afraid to try a new grain a week.

Amaranth - woody flavor, texture similar to cornmeal

Barley - pearled or unhulled is best, excellent in stews, soups, & casseroles

Buckwheat - available whole and cracked, robust - earthy flavor

Bulgur - no cooking necessary, need only be soaked in boiling water or broth and covered

Cous cous - same as bulgar, no cooking necessary, texture like a tiny pasta

Kamut - rich and buttery flavor, chewy in texture, relative of wheat

Millet - easily digested grain, small and yellow bead-like grain

Oats - great for hot cereal or favorite baked goods, good source of soluble fiber

Quinoa - delicate flavor, light texture, and easy to digest

Rice (brown, basmati, wild etc.) - long grain cooks up dry and fluffy and good in pilafs, short grain is more tender and sticky and is good as breakfast cereals and in casseroles

Wheat - good source of insoluble fiber

THE AMOUNT OF SERVINGS PER DAY THAT WE SHOULD CONSUME:

According to the Food Guide Pyramid we should consume 6-11 servings of grains per day. However, if you are trying to lose weight or maintain your weight, if you live a sedentary life with little or no exercise, or if you have high triglycerides and have to watch your carbohydrate intake, you should consume the lower end of the range. Conversely, if you lead a very active life including a regular exercise routine (at least 5X/week) or if you are a male, you should consume the higher end of the range.

ONE SERVING EQUALS:

1 slice of whole grain bread

1/2 cup cooked whole wheat pasta

1/2 of a pumpernickel bagel.

1/2 cup of brown rice

1 ounce of whole grain cold cereal

1/2 cup of barley, buckwheat, or cous cous

1 small whole wheat pita bread or **1/2 large**

1 small whole wheat roll

HOW TO COOK GRAINS:

Most are cooked by adding them to boiling water, turning the heat down to a very slow simmer, and cooking them, covered, until tender. The ideal consistency of most grains is tender and this can be achieved by fluffing them with a fork after they are cooked, and then leaving them uncovered for about 10 minutes. (This lets the steam out and keeps them from getting mushy.) Certain grains (amaranth, cornmeal, and cracked wheat) become porridgelike when cooked and make excellent breakfast cereals. Other grains (bulgur and cous cous) need only be soaked in boiling liquid and covered - no cooking is necessary. Rice cooks well if it is cooked from cold water, brought to a boil, heat lowered to a simmer, covered, and cook undisturbed for the duration of time, and then fluffed with a fork when done.

Other Grain Cooking Tips:

- *Rinse:* Before you cook grains (except most rice), rinse thoroughly in cold water until the water runs clear. Strain them to remove any dirt or debris.
- *Presoaking (optional):* Reduce cooking time, increase digestibility, and save energy by soaking hard grains overnight (or for 6-8 hours). Cook them in their soaking water.
- *Boil/Simmer:* As general rule - bring water to a boil, add grains and return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, covered tightly until done. Don't be tempted to lift the cover because the momentum of the steam will be lost. Use broth or fruit juice instead of water for flavoring.
- *Test:* Test grains for doneness. Most whole grains are slightly chewy when cooked.
- *Fluff:* Many grains benefit from fluffing. When the grains are done cooking, remove from heat and gently lift and separate with a fork. (The operative word here is gently!) Re-cover and allow to sit for 5-10 minutes before serving.
- *Abundant Water Technique Option:* Use double the water to cook grains until they are soft, then drain in a colander.
- *Easy Alternate Method:* Put grain in pan. Add water to approximately 1-1/2 inches above the surface of the grain. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to as low as you can. When water is gone, grain is cooked.
- *Invest in a Rice Cooker:* Rice cookers are available at discount stores. Pour the grain into the cooker, add 1-2 inches water above the surface of the grain. Add seasonings if desired, push the "button" and grains is cooked.

Flavor Tips:

Use broth instead of water.

Add dried soup mixes or spices to flavor grain

Add raisins to sweeten grains

Meal Ideas For Grains:

Hot Cereal

Side dishes

Salads, with added vegetables, served hot or cold

Add precooked or canned & drained beans to grains just before serving