

Incorporating More Whole Grain Foods

Resource: Fact Sheet

Topic Area: Nutrition and Meal Management

Subtopic Area: Nutrition Needs

Introduction

Grains are divided into two groups: whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel. This kernel or seed is made up of the following three parts bran, germ, endosperm. Whole grains are filled with essential nutrients that fuel the body.

Refined grains, on the other hand, have been milled to remove the bran and germ. Milling gives grains a finer texture and extends their shelf life. It also removes up to 90% of the nutrients, such as iron, dietary fiber, and many B vitamins. Although most refined grains are enriched with iron, thiamin, niacin, and riboflavin, whole grains are naturally more nutritious.

Application

Identify some examples of whole grains for the menu.

Common whole grain ingredients include the following:

- Brown rice
- Buckwheat
- Bulgur
- Millet
- Oatmeal
- Popcorn
- Quinoa
- Rolled oats
- Whole grain barley
- Whole grain corn
- Whole grain sorghum
- Whole grain triticale
- Whole oats
- Whole rye
- Whole-wheat
- Wild rice

How to find whole grains

- Look at the ingredient list. Choose products that list a whole grain ingredient first, which means there is more of the whole grain ingredient than others. If water appears as the first ingredient, look for a whole grain ingredient listed second. For foods that contain many whole grain ingredients, make sure these ingredients are at the beginning of the list of ingredients
- Look for keywords, such as “whole-wheat,” “brown rice,” “oatmeal,” “bulgur,” “buckwheat,” “whole corn,” “whole grain cornmeal,” “whole oats,” “whole rye,” or “wild rice.”
- Use the Nutrition Facts Label to check the fiber content of whole grain foods. Choose items that are higher in dietary fiber. Good sources of fiber contain 10%–19% of the Daily Value, and excellent sources contain 20% or more.
- Do not depend on color, as it is not an indicator of a whole grain. Molasses and other ingredients are commonly used in grains for a richer brown color.

Tips for Success

- Use whole grain crackers or whole-wheat bread crumbs in meatloaf.
- Add barley to vegetable soup or chili and bulgur to casseroles or stir-fry.
- Replace white rice with brown rice and enriched flour pasta with whole-wheat pasta.
- Replace up to ½ of the enriched flour with whole-wheat flour in muffins, pancakes, waffles, or cookies. Add more leavening, if needed.
- Serve whole-wheat bread instead of enriched, or make sandwiches with one of each.
- Offer popcorn, toasted oat cereal, or whole grain crackers to meet the grains component at snack.

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2014). *Family child care fundamentals*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *Choose MyPlate*. www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-choosing-whole-grain-foods

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds.

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Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2020). *Incorporating more whole grain foods*. University, MS: Author.

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