

THE PLANT-BASED LIFESTYLE

Purchasing and Cooking Grains

Grains can be affected by heat, light, and oxygen so it is best to purchase from a store with a high turnover. Before purchasing from bulk bins, smell the grains. They should smell slightly sweet or odorless. If they smell musty or oily then they are most likely rancid. On pre-packaged grains check the date on the package. They are best stored in containers or bags in a cool, dark place, ideally your refrigerator or freezer. Use grains within six months.

Before cooking grains, rinse them under cold water and sort through them for any debris. Grains can be boiled, toasted or steamed. Some grains will need to be soaked before cooking and others can be cooked immediately. For complete storing and cooking instructions check out this [handy guide](#).

Look for this whole grain stamp on packages



Grains are Healthy!

In the last issue of *The Plant-Based Lifestyle* I shared with you why carbohydrates are healthy and should comprise at least 75% of our diets. I want to dig a little deeper on one particular type of carbohydrate: grains. Much misinformation exists on the internet about grains that is not backed up by solid science. Repeated studies have documented the following benefits to whole grains: reduced risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease; lower risk of colorectal cancer; less inflammation; and better weight management. Plain, unadulterated grains - such as brown rice, millet, and farro - should be a regular staple on our tables.

What is a Grain?

Grains are carbohydrates, and carbohydrates are the fuel your body runs on. Since there are many foods considered carbohydrates what exactly are grains? Grains are the edible seeds of various grass plants. There are also some pseudo-grains which look and behave characteristically like grains, but are seeds of non-grass plants. A grain consists of four parts: the husk (also called the hull), bran, germ, and endosperm. Let's look at each of these:

AMARANTH POLENTA WITH WILD MUSHROOMS*

Want to eat more whole grains but just aren't sure of the what or how? Try this delicious, simple recipe.

½ ounce (½ cup loosely packed)
dried porcini or other dried
mushrooms

¼ cup finely chopped shallots

1 cup amaranth

¼ teaspoon. salt

Freshly ground pepper to taste

1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme, plus
more for garnish

1. Soak dried mushrooms in 1 ¾ cup boiling water for 10 minutes
2. Heat a non-stick saucepan over medium heat. Add the shallots and cook for 1 minute. Add the mushrooms and their soaking liquid, and the amaranth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Add the salt, pepper and thyme and continue simmering, covered, until the mixture is porridgy and the amaranth is tender, 10 to 15 minutes more. (Tender amaranth should still be crunchy, but shouldn't taste hard or gritty.) Stir in a bit more boiling water if the mixture becomes too thick before the amaranth is done.
4. Serve in small bowls with a sprinkle of thyme on top.

*Recipe courtesy of
wholegrainscouncil.org

Husk: the protective outer shell which usually must be removed to make the grain edible.

Bran: this is the outer layer that contains fiber and gives the grain a nutty flavor.

Germ: the part of the grain that contains most of the fat.

Endosperm: the starchy soft interior that accounts for the bulk of the seed.

Under the husk is the “whole grain” so in order to be considered “whole” a grain must have the bran, germ, and endosperm. A whole grain is a complex (good) carb. However, often grains go through several degrees of processing leaving only the starchy endosperm (think white rice). The more the grain is processed (refined), the less nutritious it becomes. Thus, the name “refined carb”.

Types of Healthy Grains

There are at least 19 varieties of whole grains many of which are gluten free. Instead of white rice, you can try brown rice (where the grain has been left intact). But don't stop there! Here are a few more that you should see in your grocery store (see side bar “How to Purchase and Cook Grains”).

Amaranth: a “pseudo grain” that is very high in protein. In South America it is popped like popcorn, but can be used in a variety of ways (see recipe at left).

Farro: also called “emmer” this grain is toothsome and nutty and works well in soups. Avoid farro with the word “pearled” before it which indicates it has been refined.

Millet: gluten-free and with its' delicate flavor it makes a great substitute for rice.

Spelt: while not gluten-free, it is a rich, nourishing, and mild grain that is part of the wheat family.

Teff: a very tiny dark grain used in the popular Ethiopian bread known as “injera”, teff has a sweet molasses-like flavor.

For many other grains and a wealth of information about whole grains check out the wholegrainscouncil.org website and email alexandra@resolvehealthandfitness.com to learn about our whole-food plant-based education programs, consultations, and meal plans.

