



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A Monthly Training Newsletter for New Food Choices 2009

May - Edition #3



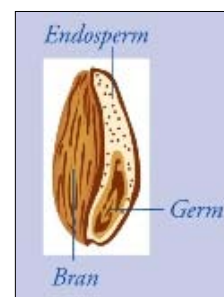
Hello WIC Staff!

This month the Food for Thought Newsletter will focus on whole grains. The Institute of Medicine’s report on the WIC food packages states: “The revised food packages emphasize the intake of whole grains in keeping with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. This should increase fiber intakes, which are currently very low among the WIC-eligible population.”

In fact, we are all urged to “choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.” Knowing what a whole grain is, how to choose whole grains, and how to make “half our grains whole” can be somewhat confusing. Take a walk through the grocery store and the choices are numerous; from the bread to the cereal aisle we are surrounded by grain products, refined, enriched, whole, and the list goes on. As WIC staff we all need to know about whole grains to assist our clients in selecting WIC approved whole grains starting in October. This newsletter will help you learn a *whole* lot about whole grains!

WHAT IS A WHOLE GRAIN?

All grains start out as whole grains. Whole grains are high in fiber, carbohydrate, and micronutrients. In their natural state growing in the fields, whole grains are the entire seed of the plant. This seed (or kernel) is made up of 3 parts: the bran, the endosperm, and the germ. The bran is a tough, fibrous outer layer that protects the inside of the kernel and is full of fiber, B vitamins, and trace minerals. Under the bran is the endosperm; this is the largest section which is mostly carbohydrate and some protein. The germ is small and rich in vitamin E, folic acid, phytonutrients (which are health promoting naturally occurring chemicals), antioxidants, and essential fatty acids. Grains are processed in mills (milling) that use rollers to separate the bran and the germ from the endosperm. This results in refined grains, which contain less fiber and nutrients than whole grains. Whole grains have not had their bran and germ removed during the milling process, which allows the nutrients packed into all 3 layers to work together to provide the maximum health benefits. That is why eating whole grains is best!



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT THE FIVE APPROVED WHOLE GRAIN CHOICES

1. 100% Whole Wheat Bread - Wheat breads that do not say “whole wheat” are a mixture of enriched white flour and whole wheat flour. “Whole wheat” will be listed as the first ingredient if the bread is made from 100% whole wheat. It is important to read the label since terms like “wheat bread,” “stone-ground,” or “multi-grain” does not guarantee that the bread contains whole grains. Color is not a good way to tell either because bread may be darker simply because of added molasses. Only those breads that are labeled as “100% whole wheat” will be allowed from WIC.

2. Bulgur – Bulgur is a processed form of whole wheat. To make bulgur, wheat kernels are boiled, dried, cracked, and then sorted by size. Often confused with cracked wheat, bulgur is ready to eat with minimal cooking. Because bulgur has been precooked and dried, it only needs to be boiled for about 10 minutes to be ready to eat. Bulgur can be used in recipes in place of rice or couscous. It is probably best known for the Middle Eastern minty vegetable and grain salad called Tabbouleh; but is also a low fat ingredient in pilaf, soup, stuffing and casseroles. For recipes using bulgur visit: <http://www.wheatfoods.org/Recipe>.



3. Soft Corn Tortillas- Many of us think of corn as a vegetable; but it is also a whole grain. Corn tortillas are a low-fat food with about ½ the calories of the same size flour tortilla. They are gluten free which makes them a good alternative for people who are gluten intolerant. Corn tortillas are also quite versatile since the flavor of corn blends well with vegetables, beans, and even peanut butter and fruit. Try this quick snack: Warm a corn tortilla in the microwave for 10 seconds. Spread with 1 tablespoon of peanut butter. Fill with it with your choice of fruit such as berries, pineapple, kiwi, or banana and then sprinkle with shredded coconut. Roll it and enjoy a tasty whole grain treat!



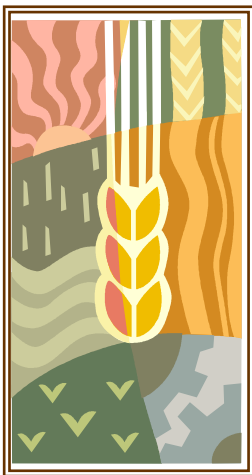
4. Oatmeal - Because all oatmeal types are made from the whole oat kernel the nutritional differences are minimal; the main difference is texture and cooking time. Oatmeal is made from oat kernels that are coarsely ground and steamed. Then they are either rolled or steel cut. The more oats are rolled and steamed, the softer they become and the quicker they cook. These rolled oats are labeled as “old fashioned” or regular oats, quick oats, and instant oats. Steel cut oats are made by cutting the whole raw oat into smaller pieces, giving them a nuttier, chewier texture than rolled oats. For baking, use rolled oats because they are softer. Interest in oatmeal has been increasing in recent years due to the cholesterol lowering effect when eaten everyday. Vermont is the leader in per capita consumption of cooked oatmeal. And, by the way, the Vermont oat eaters like to add nutmeg, cinnamon, and ginger to the pot while it is cooking. Add some of your favorite spices to your next bowl of oatmeal



5. Brown Rice - The difference between brown rice and white rice is not just color. Brown rice is unmilled or partly milled and has a mild, nutty flavor. White rice has the bran and endosperm removed. Brown rice is also a concentrated source of fiber with three times the fiber of white rice. Cooked brown rice may be kept in the refrigerator for up to 5 days and frozen for up to 6 months; making it easy to cook extra and store for later use. Here are a few quick tips for using brown rice: Add to pita or wrap sandwiches, top with steamed vegetables for an easy rice bowl, add a spoonful of yogurt and top with honey and chopped almonds. Find recipes, WIC Brown Rice Fact Sheets, and more at: <http://www.usarice.com>.

Now that you know a little more about whole grains from wheat to brown rice; take a look at page 3 of this newsletter for the WIC approved whole grain choices!

EATING THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF WHOLE GRAINS



Did you know most Americans eat enough grains, but not enough whole grains? The Dietary Guidelines define an adult serving as an ounce equivalent of grain such as 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or a ½ cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta. At least ½ of all grains eaten should be whole grains.

In the Harvard-based Nurses’ Health Study, women who ate 2-3 servings of whole grain products each day were 30 percent less likely to have a heart attack or die from heart disease over a ten year period than women who ate less than 1 serving of whole grains per week.

The amount of grains you need to eat depends on your age, gender, and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts are listed at <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains.html>. This web site is a great tool for determining the amount of whole grain that is right for you!

WIC APPROVED WHOLE GRAIN CHOICES

Clients may purchase any of these whole grain choices in any combination up to the amount printed on the check.

- Whole wheat bread
- Soft corn tortillas
- Bulgur
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal



Any brand may be purchased as long as the product meets these specifications:

Whole wheat bread:

Bread labeled “100% Whole Wheat”, organic or non-organic, 16 oz or 24 oz package

Soft corn tortillas:

Plain, yellow, or white, 16 oz package

Bulgur:

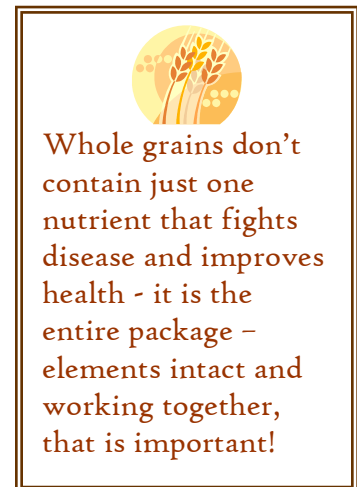
Plain, organic or non-organic, bulk or 16 oz package

Brown rice:

Plain, instant, or regular, organic or non-organic, bulk or 16 oz, 24 oz, 32 oz package

Oatmeal:

Plain, cut, rolled, or instant, organic or non-organic, bulk or 16 oz package



What will not be allowed?

- Bread in packages smaller than 16 oz, bagels, bagel bread, English muffins, buns, and dinner rolls
- Store made flour or wheat tortillas, hard shelled tortillas, chips, wraps, or any other tortilla product
- Bulgur, brown rice, and oatmeal with added ingredients or flavors
- Brown rice packaged in boxes, rice with added ingredients, Basamati, Jasmine, or wild rice
- Oatmeal packaged in boxes or cylinder containers or with added flavors

WHOLE GRAIN BREAKFAST CEREALS

Half of all the WIC approved breakfast cereals are now whole grain, including individual packets of oatmeal! To see the list of all the whole grain cereals visit the WIC website at:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/WIC/newfoods.htm>

FIVE SIMPLE TIPS TO FOR EATING MORE WHOLE GRAINS

- 1) Read food labels and choose items that list a whole grain *first* on the ingredient label.
- 2) Eat whole grains as snacks. For example, popcorn is a whole grain, grab a handful but limit the butter & salt.
- 3) Add whole grains to vegetable soups or use bulgur in casseroles.
- 4) Use 100% whole grain breads for lunches or snacks.
- 5) Find new recipes & resources using whole grains from The Grain Council at: <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org>. Nothing inspires trying a new food more than a great recipe.

What ways can you add more whole grains to your day?

