Getting More Healthy Grains In Your Diet

The US Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend we consume six one-ounce servings of grains each day for optimum health. Of those six servings, at least half – or three servings – should come from whole grains. While six servings doesn’t sound like a lot, most Americans, and especially children, fail to come close to meeting the recommendation for whole grains. And some people have trouble identifying healthy grain foods.

To help people meet the recommended daily servings of grains, the Wheat Foods Council did some “grainstorming” and came up with these nutritious, delicious, convenient ways to work more healthy grains into your daily routine:

At Breakfast

• For those busy, run-out-the-door to work or school days, simply grab a bowl of whole grain cereal. Serve with low-fat milk, or mix with low-fat cottage cheese.
• Frozen waffles, either whole wheat or regular, are another convenient choice. Instead of syrup, try spreading them with cream cheese and your favorite fruit jam.
• Think outside of the box – the old lunch favorite of peanut butter and jelly on bread isn’t just for lunch anymore! Try it for breakfast using white whole wheat bread and almond or hazelnut butter. Add a glass of low-fat milk or yogurt.

At Lunch

• Tired of sandwiches? How about a tortilla instead? Tortillas or pita pockets are great ways to get your grains while being creative with the fillings – from low-fat meats or cheese, to vegetables and even fruit.
• Soups are a good way to fill up without a lot of calories. Add whole wheat crackers or a slice of hearty bread on the side to complete the meal and give you energy.
• English muffins aren’t just for breakfast – toast one for lunch and top with peanut butter and apple slices. Add thin slices of sharp cheddar for a tasty topping.

At Dinner

• Wheat berries – the entire wheat kernel (except for the hull) comprising the bran, germ and endosperm – are packed with nutrients, easy to cook and use, and taste great. Serve as a delicious hot side dish at dinner, use in baked goods or salads for a crunchy texture, or add them to soups or even chili.
• Pasta is always a meal-time favorite and today, the choices are endless. Whole wheat pasta goes great with chunky, hearty sauces while enriched pasta makes the perfect base for lighter dishes. Enriched wheat foods have B vitamins and iron replaced in equal or larger amounts (riboflavin is double and thiamine is almost double) to those in whole grain products, and are fortified with folic acid in amounts slightly double that found in whole grain products.
• Bulgur is another interesting, delicious option. Bulgur is white or red, hard or soft, whole wheat kernels that have been soaked, boiled, and dried. Then, 5 percent of the bran is removed and the remaining kernel is cracked into small pieces. The result is parcooked, cracked wheat. Bulgur differs from cracked wheat in that it is pre-cooked. It must be soaked or cooked to be edible, but is a great convenience food since it can then be refrigerated in containers or frozen for later use. Try it in meatloaf, soups, stews, casseroles and meats or sauces for Mexican or Italian dishes.

For more information on all things wheat foods, visit us at wheatfoods.org
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How to Cook Wheat Berries
Servings: About 4 ½ cups

2 cups wheat berries
7 cups cold water
1 teaspoon salt

Rinse wheat berries well under cool running water. Place in a large heavy saucepan. Add water and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce heat, cover, and simmer gently for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Drain and rinse.

Use immediately or cover and refrigerate for up to 2 days; freeze for up to 1 month.

How to Cook Bulgur
Servings: Approximately 4 ½ cups

1 cup bulgur
2 cups cold water

Add cold water to bulgur; bring to a boil. Cover. Let simmer 15 minutes or until tender. Let stand 5 minutes. Drain off excess liquid.

Bulgur has an extremely long storage life and can be kept for up to six months in the refrigerator, longer if frozen.

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