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BREAKFAST OFFERS WHOLE GRAIN CHOICES

Grains...the food group everyone loves to eat...pasta, cereal, rice, popcorn, and don't forget to pass the rolls. Everyone gets plenty of grains but not necessarily the right kinds. Currently only 3% of the calories consumed annually come from whole grains.

The USDA MyPyramid recommends that half of your grains be whole which translate into 3 servings for the average 2000 calorie diet. USDA defines a serving as 16 grams, so you need 48 grams per day. A source of complex carbohydrates, whole grains supply protein, soluble and insoluble fiber, B vitamins – riboflavin, niacin, thiamin, and folic acid, Vitamin E, and minerals – iron, zinc, and magnesium. Just like fruits and vegetables, whole grains supply phytochemicals and antioxidants. Research suggests whole grains protect against heart disease, cancer, obesity, and diabetes. Health benefits come from the whole grain food and not just from the fiber or individual nutrients.

Whole grain foods include all three parts of a grain kernel: the bran, germ, and endosperm. The type of grain kernel can vary. Popular choices include wheat, rice, corn, oats, and barley. Wheat represents the most popular choice in the U.S., the staple of the American diet. Less common grains eaten here are brown and wild rice, buckwheat, bulgur, rye and wheatberries. There are still other whole grains and you may find them added to multi-grain products and in specialty food stores.

The majority of people get their whole grains from breakfast foods. New products are arriving daily, a response to consumer demand for healthier food items. In fact, bakery items, breakfast cereals, and snacks account for the largest number of new product introductions in the supermarket. Look for 100% whole grain bagels, breakfast bars, English muffins, French toast, muffin mixes, pancakes, and waffles. There are even pop-tarts that have 8 grams of whole grain per serving.

The cold and snow this winter make hot cereal an obvious breakfast choice. Oatmeal, regular and even instant, is 100% whole grain and well-known for lowering cholesterol. Steel cut oats, also known as "Scottish oats" have a heartier taste and texture but take 20 minutes to cook. You can shorten cooking time by soaking the oats in water overnight. Grits and cream of wheat are not whole grain. You can find a wide assortment of multi-grain hot cereals in the "health food" section of your local grocery. I have been surprised at all of the products available and added a few to my breakfast routine.

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For the cereal lover, select 100% whole grain cold cereals, like shredded wheat, granola, raisin bran, toasted oats and wheat flakes. Many cold cereals have been reformulated so they are at least partially whole grains. To find out how many grams are in your favorite product go to the Whole Grains Council website at www.wholegrainscouncil.com and look under the “Find Whole Grains” section. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Check the label for the whole grain stamp which identifies how much whole grain is in a serving. This voluntary labeling is an excellent tool for making decisions at the check-out aisle and I anticipate more companies will start to use it. Recently I did a supermarket tour of grain based products to see which ones had the stamp. Most did not, not even some 100% whole grain items, which is a missed opportunity to promote their merchandise.



Try these recipes for breakfast foods to add more whole grain to your diet. Two local stores *Common Market* and *Mom's Organic Market* have buckwheat flour and steel cut oats in bulk.

BUCKWHEAT PANCAKE MIX

2 cups **buckwheat flour**
2 cups **whole wheat flour**
4 Tablespoon sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt

Combine all ingredients in medium bowl until well blended. Store in airtight container at room temperature up to 2 months. Makes about 4 cups. Serve with apple butter

BUCKWHEAT PANCAKES

1 cup **buckwheat pancake mix** (see recipe above)
2 Tablespoon oil
1 cup milk
1 egg, slightly beaten

Grease griddle or skillet with butter or nonstick cooking spray unless it has a nonstick coating. Heat until hot.

Place pancake mix in medium bowl; make well in center.

Lightly beat the egg in a small bowl. Blend in oil and milk with wire whisk. Pour into well. Stir with wooden spoon just until blended (will have small lumps)

To make pancakes, drop 1/4 cupfuls of batter onto hot griddle. Cook 3-4 minutes or until bubbles appear and break on the surface of the pancakes. Turn pancakes with spatula. Cook 2-3 minutes or until bottoms are browns. (To check for doneness, gently lift bottom of pancake with spatula)

Serve immediately. Makes about 12 large pancakes.

DEBBIE'S WHOLE GRAIN MUFFINS

1 cup **oat bran cereal or oatmeal**
1 cup **white whole wheat flour**
1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon **wheat germ**
3/4 cup skim milk
2 eggs
1/4 cup molasses
2 tablespoons walnut or canola oil
1/2 cup applesauce, no sugar
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup walnuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°F. Pour oat bran, flour, brown sugar, baking powder, salt, and wheat germ into mixing bowl. Stir well.

Mix together milk, eggs, molasses, oil, and applesauce. Pour into dry ingredients and stir just until dry ingredients are moistened. Stir in raisins and walnuts. Pour into greased muffin cups until 3/4 full and bake for 18 minutes until golden brown.

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