

SUSTAINABLE LIVING GUIDE:

43. SEVEN WHOLE GRAINS TO ADD TO YOUR DIET¹

Michelle Schoffro Cook[©]

While many people steer clear of whole grains, they'd do well to give them a second look. The average person eats refined grain products such as white flour and white rice and avoids whole grains like the plague. Meanwhile low-carb dieters swear off whole grains in favor of high protein options such as meat and poultry under the false belief that all grains are evil to the dieter (whole grains actually help stabilize blood sugar — critical to the success of any weight loss regime). And many other people simply avoid whole grains because they don't know what to do with them or how to prepare them. There are many delicious and highly nutritious whole grains to choose from, so adding whole grains to your diet needn't be daunting. While there are many options, here are seven whole grains to get you started: barley, brown rice, kamut (pronounced "ka-moot"), quinoa (pronounced "keen-wah"), spelt, oats, and wild rice.

Barley

Used as far back as the Stone Age for currency, food, and medicine, barley is a great addition to a healthy diet. Because barley contains plentiful amounts of both soluble and insoluble fiber, it helps aid bowel regularity. It contains 96 calories, 22 grams of carbohydrates, and 3 grams of fiber per half-cup of cooked barley. Unrefined barley contains abundant amounts of potassium. It also has lots of magnesium, manganese, vitamin E, B-complex vitamins, zinc, copper, iron, calcium, protein, sulfur, and phosphorus. This versatile ingredient can be added to soups, stews, cereal, salads, pilaf, or ground into flour for baked goods or desserts.

Brown Rice

Brown rice is more nutritious and a much better option than white rice. Unlike white rice, it offers you vitamin E (important for healthy immunity, skin, and many essential functions in your body) and is high in fiber. White rice is stripped of its fiber and most nutrients too. In its whole brown rice form, it contains high amounts of the minerals manganese, magnesium, and selenium. It also contains tryptophan, which helps with sleep. Brown rice can easily replace white rice in almost any recipe: soups, stews, and pilafs. It is an excellent choice for those who are gluten-sensitive or celiac.

Kamut and Spelt

Kamut and spelt are ancient grains that are part of the wheat family. Sometimes people with wheat allergies can tolerate kamut or spelt. Both of these tasty grains have higher nutritional value than whole wheat. Both kamut and spelt are high in protein. Spelt is packed with the minerals manganese, magnesium, and copper, and also contains high amounts of the mood-regulating and energy-boosting B-vitamins niacin, thiamine, and riboflavin. Choose kamut or spelt bread or pasta to replace white options.

¹ Care2, healthy & green living, September 04, 2010

Oats

[Oats](#) are good for your body in many ways. They help stabilize blood sugar and lower cholesterol, and are high in protein and fiber. Oats are available in many forms including instant, steel-cut, rolled, bran, groats, flakes, and flour. The best options are the less refined form such as [steel-cut](#), rolled, flakes, and bran. Oat flour is an excellent substitute for wheat flour in baking recipes. A good source of minerals such as manganese, selenium, magnesium, and the sleep aid tryptophan, in many studies oats also assist with lowering cholesterol and reducing the risk of heart disease.

Quinoa

Quinoa, a staple of the ancient Incas who revered it as sacred, is not a true grain, rather an herb. Unlike most grains quinoa is a complete protein and is high in iron, magnesium, B-vitamins, and fiber. In studies, quinoa is a proven aid for migraine sufferers and, as with most whole grains, lessens the risk for heart disease. It also contains the building blocks for superoxide dismutase – an important antioxidant that helps protect the energy centers of your cells from free radical damage.

Wild Rice

Not a true grain, wild rice is actually a type of aquatic grass seed native to the United States and Canada. It tends to be a bit pricier than other grains, but its high content of protein and delicious nutty flavor make wild rice worth every penny. It's an excellent choice for people with celiac disease or those who have gluten or wheat sensitivities. Wild rice also has a lower caloric content than many grains at 83 calories per half cup of cooked rice. And it is high in fiber. Add wild rice to soups, stews, salads, and pilaf. It's important to note that wild rice is black. There are many blends of white and wild rice, which primarily consist of refined white rice. Be sure to use only real wild rice, not the blends.

Summary

Despite the common myth that all grains are taboo, junk food addicts, carb watchers, and whole grain novices can easily embrace these nutritious foods. Once you start adding them to your diet you'll find that whole grains can help with weight-balancing efforts, keep you feeling full, and add taste and variety to your meals.

Cooking Guide for Whole Grains	
The following water amounts and cooking times are based on 1 cup of grain. As for all whole grains, add water and grain in a pot and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce to low heat to simmer for the amount of cooking time specified.	
Grain	Cooking Time
Barley (pearled)	3 cups water, 15 minutes
Brown rice	2 cups water, 35 to 40 minutes
Oats (quick cooking)	2 to 3 cups water, 12 to 20 minutes
Oats (rolled)	2 to 3 cups water, 40 to 50 minutes
Quinoa	2 cups water, 15 minutes
Wild rice	3 cups water, 50 to 60 minutes
Kamut and spelt can be cooked as whole grains but are most commonly used as whole grain flour in breads and other baked goods.	