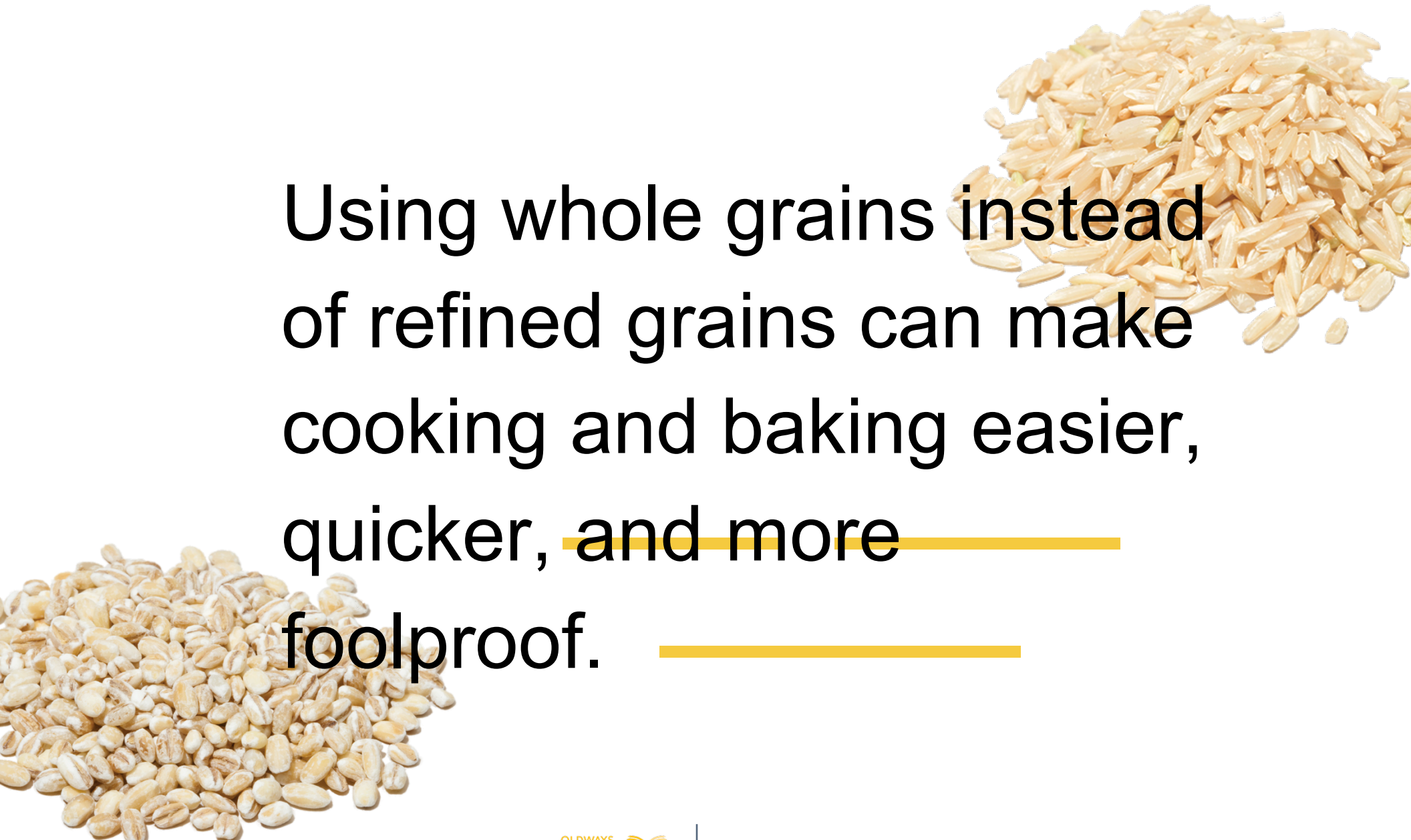


Whole Grains for the Reluctant



November 2018
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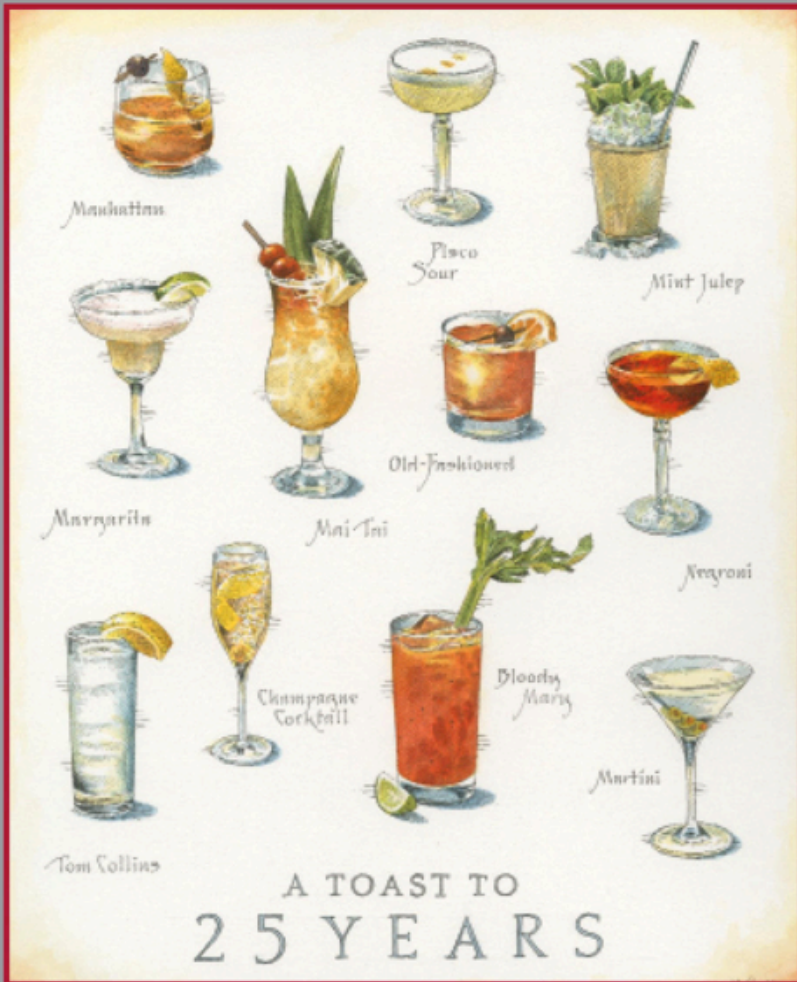


Using whole grains instead
of refined grains can make
cooking and baking easier,
quicker, and more
foolproof.

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Grain Bowls at Home

There's a reason you order grain bowls at a counter rather than make them at home: Preparing multiple unique elements is a project. But what if you apply some strategy?

BY ANDREA GEARY

Archaeological evidence suggests that humans have been eating from bowls for at least 20,000 years. But never have bowls been as trendy as they are now. Noodle bowls, breakfast bowls, veggie bowls, taco bowls, and more (what's a Buddha bowl?) are all big sellers in the fast-casual dining scene, and I can see why: In a single vessel, you get a healthful, vibrant mix of complementary flavors and textures. Everything mingles as you eat, creating a uniquely satisfying experience.

I particularly enjoy bowls built around grains. Heaped onto a base of earthy, nutty kernels, you'll typically find some cooked vegetables, a protein, a potent dressing, a pickled element, and a crunchy garnish.

I knew that creating a grain bowl from scratch would be a project. After all, what makes a bowl so appealing is that it offers six or seven distinct components. Sure enough, when I made my first one in the test kitchen, hours went by—but there were mountains of dishes to wash. But I was rewarded with a terrific (and terrifically varied) meal.

If I could streamline the process, I might just be able to turn grain bowls into a reasonable at-home endeavor. As I considered the challenge, timelines and opportunities for multitasking swirled in my head. I was thinking less like a cook and more like a project manager.

Goal Setting

Before diving in, I drafted a mission statement of sorts: Efficiency and organization would be key—second only to great taste, which is always paramount. The bowls had to be healthful and colorful. I would use as few ingredients as possible (repurposing ingredients would help achieve that goal) and as little equipment as I could get away with. Finally, I wanted to develop several recipes to suit varied tastes.

I outlined a vision for my first bowl. The protein would be salmon: It fit in nicely with my guidelines of speed, ease, and healthfulness. Brown rice seemed like a good choice for the grain; its nutty taste and



STEP-BY-STEP VIDEO AND NUTRITION INFORMATION
CookIllustrated.com/feb19



Hoisin-glazed salmon, nutty brown rice, and roasted carrots and shiitakes team up with gingery pickled cucumbers in this Asian-inspired bowl.

chewy texture make it ideal for a bowl. It was also appealing because it can simply be baked and drained rather than simmered via the more finicky absorption method, which requires a prescribed amount of liquid. Rice and salmon work well with a variety of seasonings; here, I decided to go for an Asian spin. I'd work out the remaining details as I went along.

Taking roughly 30 minutes to prepare, rice was the most time-consuming element of the dish. I put a pot of water on to boil, and while it heated, I wasted no time getting started on the pickled element. Making pickles is a profitable undertaking if there ever was one. They require almost no work—just a bit of time—yet the flavor payoff is huge. I simply sweetened white vinegar with a little sugar, cultured it with grated fresh ginger, and then stirred in sliced cucumber. I set the cukes aside to soak, put the rice into the now-boiling water, and continued to work.

Trending Toward Greatness

On to the vegetables and salmon. Stovetop techniques would be inefficient since they require a certain amount of babysitting. Roasting, however, is mostly hands-off and would leave me available to check more tasks off my list. As I thought about ways to crank out two or three components at once, another trend came to mind: sheet-pan meals. Loading multiple ingredients onto a single baking sheet would be a fast way to cook items in tandem.

I decided on shiitake mushrooms and carrots; both would be tender in about 20 minutes as long as I cut the carrots thin. The vegetables would need more time in the oven than the salmon, so I would give them a head start at 500 degrees before lowering the heat and adding the salmon fillets.

I tossed the carrots with oil and salt and deeply complex, sweet-tart dressing. I gave the shiitake mushroom caps a similar treatment, adding some water to the mix so that steam would jump-start their cooking, before spreading them out on the other half of the sheet.

After 10 minutes, the carrots and mushrooms were starting to soften and brown, so I removed the sheet from the oven and pushed the vegetables to either side, making room in the center of the sheet for four salmon fillets that I had brushed with hoisin sauce to create a sweet glaze. I returned the sheet to the oven, which I had turned down to 275 degrees, for 10 minutes—just enough time to gently cook everything through.

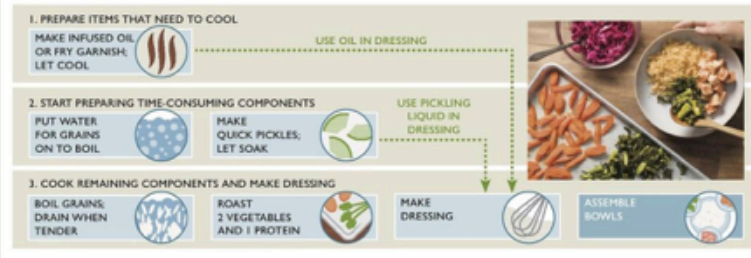
Recycle, Reuse

Things were humming right along. The only remaining element was the dressing, which meant I needed oil and acid. I glanced at my workstation, spotting the cucumbers soaking in lightly sweet vinegar. There was the acid. To give the vegetable oil for the dressing some personality, I sliced sliced scallion whites and ginger in it just for 30 seconds until their aromas were released.

As I waited for the infused oil to cook, I realized that the next time around, I could maximize productivity by making the scallion-ginger oil before

Grain Bowl Flowchart

We wanted a recipe whose multiple components could be prepared in a single cooking session. To keep the time to about an hour, we strategized to find efficiencies: We repurposed ingredients in multiple applications, chose straightforward cooking methods, roasted three ingredients in tandem on a single baking sheet, and started long-cooking items early to allow for multitasking.



anything else. It could cool as I prepared other items, and then it would be ready to go when it was time to mix the dressing.

I carried on, combining a few tablespoons of the pickling liquid with the oil and a little more of the hoisin sauce that I'd just painted onto the salmon. I took a taste: With very little work, I'd achieved a deeply complex, sweet-tart dressing.

Ready for assembly, I pulled out four shallow bowls. To avoid any dry grains, I tossed the rice with some of the dressing before arranging the hoisin-glazed salmon, roasted shiitakes and carrots, and gingery cucumbers on top. Move dressing and showers of toasted sesame seeds and sliced scallion greens finished the bowl with final layers of crunch and freshness. I would pass stracha at the table for those who liked a spicy kick. This bowl was everything I'd hoped for, and I'd pulled it off in about an hour.

With my maximum-efficiency bowl complete, I used my template to create three more: another Asian-inspired bowl featuring honey-wisacha tofu and bulgar; a chicken and brown rice bowl with Southwestern accents such as chipotle, lime, and peapitas; and a final bowl combining faro and sausage with roasted broccoli rabe, red peppers, and pickled grapes.

Grain Bowls, Now or Later

Each of our grain bowl recipes makes four servings. Serve them all at once, or pack up the components separately and you'll have the makings of two meals for two—or four meals for one—ready at a moment's notice to eat at home or take on the go. The bowls are equally good served hot or at room temperature.

Mission accomplished: Here were four hearty but light, great-tasting bowls that didn't require tons of ingredients, time, or equipment.

BROWN RICE BOWL WITH VEGETABLES AND SALMON

SERVES 4 TOTAL TIME: 1½ HOURS

If your knife is too dull to cut through the salmon skin, try a serrated knife. It is important to keep the skin on during cooking; once the salmon is cooked, the skin will be easy to remove. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat until fragrant (about 1 minute), and then remove the skillet from the heat so the seeds won't scorch. Our recipe for Faro Bowl with Vegetables and Sausage is available for free for four months at CookIllustrated.com/feb19.

- ½ cup vegetable oil, divided
- 2 scallions, white and green parts separated and sliced thin on bias
- 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger, divided
- ½ cup distilled white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1½ teaspoons table salt, divided, plus salt for cooking rice
- 1 English cucumber, quartered lengthwise, seeded, and sliced on bias ¼ inch thick
- 1½ cups short-grain brown rice
- 1 pound carrots, peeled and sliced on bias ½ inch thick
- 1 pound shiitake mushrooms, stemmed, caps larger than 2 inches halved
- 1 (1-pound) skin-on salmon fillet, about 1½ inches thick at thickest part
- 4 teaspoons hoisin sauce, divided
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted
- Stracha (optional)

1. Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 500 degrees. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in large sautépan over medium heat until shimmering. Add scallion whites and 1½ teaspoons ginger and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer scallion mixture to small bowl.

2. Bring 6 cups water to boil in now-empty sautépan. While water is coming to boil, whisk vinegar, sugar, ¾ teaspoon salt, and remaining ½ teaspoon ginger in medium bowl until sugar is dissolved. Add cucumber and stir until coated. Set aside, stirring occasionally.

3. Add rice and 1 teaspoon salt to boiling water. Reduce heat and simmer until rice is tender, about 30 minutes. Drain rice well and return it to sautépan. Cover and set aside.

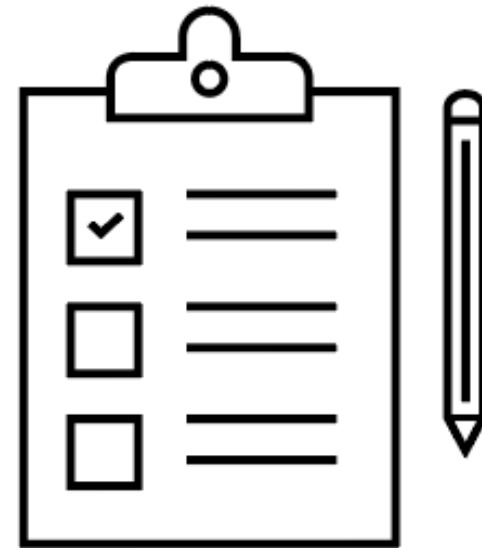
4. While rice is cooking, toss carrots with 1 tablespoon oil and ½ teaspoon salt. Spread in even layer on half of mirrored baking sheet. Toss mushrooms with 2 tablespoons water, remaining 1 tablespoon oil, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt and spread in even layer on other half of sheet. Roast until vegetables are just beginning to soften and brown, about 10 minutes.

5. While vegetables are cooking, cut salmon in half. Make each piece crosswise to create 4 equal pieces. Make 2 shallow slashes about 1 inch apart along skin side of each piece, being careful not to cut into flesh. Brush flesh side of each piece with ½ teaspoon hoisin.

6. Reduce oven temperature to 275 degrees and remove sheet. Push vegetables to either side to clear space in middle of sheet. Carefully place salmon, skin side down, in clearing. Return sheet to oven and roast until vegetables are tender and browned and centers of fillets are still translucent when checked with tip of paring knife and register 125 degrees (for medium-rare), 10 to 12 minutes.

Surveys provide invaluable insight into how people cook at home

- Recipe idea surveys
- Shoppers' surveys
- Equipment surveys
- Recipe-testing surveys
- Post-publication surveys



“
Do you cook and bake with
whole grains?
If not, why not?”

This is my favorite:

“

I have some Einkorn in my basement,
but it intimidates me!

”



Basically, they're worried:

- Whole grains might taste bad
- Whole grains aren't compatible with the foods I know and love
- Whole grains take forever to cook, and they're easy to mess up
- Whole grain flour will make my baked goods heavy and dense and tough



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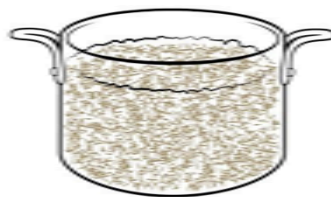
Benefits of the Bran

Unlike refined grains of white rice, brown rice grains are still surrounded by the bran. We found that this is a big advantage when it comes to making fried rice.



No Need for Leftovers

Fresh white rice naturally clumps, so it has to be refrigerated overnight to stale and harden before stir-frying. Brown rice's bran helps prevent clumping, so it can be used immediately after cooking.



Quick Cooking Method

The bran protects the starch within each grain, so brown rice can be cooked aggressively, and thus quickly, like pasta.



Less Oil Required

Because the bran helps brown rice grains stay separate, you need to use only about half the oil a recipe calling for white rice would require.

Many whole grains are
as easy to cook as pasta:
~~boil, drain, done.~~

““

Using brown rice made the dish more flavorful and substantial. This was also an easy meal to prepare on a weeknight.

””



4 Myths: BUSTED

- ❌ Whole grains taste bad
- ❌ Whole grains are difficult to cook
- ❌ Whole grains take too long to cook
- ❌ Whole grains don't go with the foods I know and love



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What could possibly go wrong?

- Whole wheat pancakes will taste bad
- Whole wheat pancakes will be dense and tough

Keep it Fresh

“

To ensure the best flavor, use either recently purchased whole-wheat flour or flour that has been stored in the freezer for less than 12 months.

”

SCIENCE Go Ahead: Beat the Heck out of This Batter

Recipes for white-flour pancakes always warn against overmixing. That's because it will create a strong, restrictive gluten network, and that makes for tough, dense cakes. But we discovered that the same rule doesn't apply to pancakes made with whole-wheat flour for two reasons. The first is that cup for cup, whole-wheat flour has fewer gluten-forming proteins than white flour. Second, whole-wheat flour contains bran, which is sharp and will cut through gluten strands that do form. When the gluten strands are shorter, the gluten network is weakened and the pancakes become even more tender.

WHITE-FLOUR PANCAKES



25 stirs



100 stirs

WHOLE-WHEAT-FLOUR PANCAKES



25 stirs



100 stirs

Whole grain flour makes quick breads, muffins, and pancakes lighter and more tender, and more foolproof.

Whole Wheat Pancakes

“

My favorite pancake recipe, bar none. Comes together quickly, impossible to over-stir, and the resulting pancakes are nice and fluffy with that beautiful, nutty, whole-wheat flavor.

”



Whole Grains can make cooking
and baking:

Easier

Quicker

More foolproof



Thank you!

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