

Cooking Light[®]

Sidney Fry, MS, RD
Nutrition Editor

COOKING LIGHT'S



HEALTHY
HABITS

Download a Healthy
Habits Tracker

A weekly sheet to record your
progress: CookingLight.com/HealthyHabits

SHARE
— Your —
STORY

And join the yearlong conversation at Community.CookingLight.com or Facebook.com/CookingLight.



Get the 12HH Newsletter

Tips, recipes, insights,
support—right to your in-box.
CookingLight.com/newsletter

The 12 Healthy Habits
CALENDAR

What we've done so far ...



04

APRIL'S GOAL

GO FOR WHOLE GRAINS!

EAT THREE MORE SERVINGS EACH DAY

A WHOLE GRAIN IS A simple food, the soul of the health food ideal. There's good reason to eat whole grains: The fiber and nutrients are associated with reduced risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease, and offer the added perk of better weight maintenance. Problem is, getting whole grains into a modern diet isn't simple at all. The whole-grain landscape is confusing. There is no simple standard for a serving. Food labels are unreliable. Definitions are

tricky. The goal this month is to take a simple approach to servings, decode the labels, and then get three more servings of whole grains into your diet each day, without a lot of fuss: It can be as simple as having a serving at breakfast, lunch, and snack time or dinner.

Here's what you need to know. A grain is a seed, having three parts: a vitamin- and oil-rich germ (the part that sprouts); a starchy coating that feeds the germ; and a layer of antioxidant-rich, high-fiber bran that

Continued on page 58

MEET THIS MONTH'S GUINEA PIGS

Check in on their (and other 12HHers') progress at TheTwelve.CookingLight.com.



ADAM HICKMAN
*The Whole-Grain Seeker
on a Budget*



SARAH SORENSEN
*The Busy
Young Mom*



L'ANNE GILMAN
*The Whole-Grain
Newbie*



The Whole-Grain Seeker on a Budget

“I’m confused about what I’m getting—or not getting—when I read the labels.”

ADAM HICKMAN

AGE: 25, *Recipe Tester and Developer, Birmingham, Ala.*

► **HIS CHALLENGE** “I eat raisin bran and feel proud, but I’m not even sure it’s whole-grain,” says Adam. “I need help translating what the marketing people put on packages.” Adam, an avid cook and a young addition to our staff, lives on a tight budget and is used to making a little go a long way. This means plenty of starch and pasta, but not enough whole grain beyond bread and oatmeal. “Whole grains can be expensive, and I want to make sure what I’m buying is genuine, and that I’m eating the right amount of it.”

OUR ADVICE Yes, raisin bran is a whole-grain choice, but nothing on the box really tells you how much whole grain you’re getting. Label literacy is crucial for anyone who eats grains from any place other than the bulk-food barrel.

▪ **Focus on 48:** Forty-eight grams of whole grains are recommended per day, useful when looking at processed foods (though many labels don’t tout how many grams the product contains). Aim for 16 grams of whole grains per serving. Wheat Ritz crackers, for example, have 5 grams per serving, but, tasty as they are, you’d have to eat 48 crackers (224 calories) to get a 16-gram serving.

▪ **Read front-of-box claims:** Look for “100% whole grain” or “whole grain.” The 100% claim means all

grains in the product are whole, and you’ll get at least 16 grams per serving. To earn a “whole grain” claim, a product need contain only 51% whole grain and at least 8 grams. Good, but not as much bang for the buck. “Made with whole grains” is not always a reliable claim: You may just get a light dusting.

▪ **Study the ingredient list:** If the product lists “100% whole” or “whole-grain” wheat, corn, or other whole grain first, you’ve found the real thing.

▪ **Look for other claims, stamps, and dingbats:** If you see a claim or stamp (like the USDA’s MyPyramid logo or a Whole Grains Council stamp), use this as a starting point. Still check for “100% whole” or “whole grain,” and avoid products with a long list of ingredients. Also know that the absence of a stamp doesn’t mean much: We’ve seen 100% whole-grain products that have no WGC stamp.

▪ **Buy unprocessed whole grains.** Wild rice, popcorn, and other whole grains often aren’t labeled as 100% whole, even though they are. Go to CookingLight.com/HealthyHabits for a full list of whole grains, plus recipes.



- Focus on 48
- Read front-of-box claims
- Study the ingredient list
- Look for the stamp
- Buy unprocessed grains



"THERE'S NOTHING EASIER THAN COOKING WHOLE GRAINS."

Healthy Habits Hero: MARK BITTMAN

NY Times food writer, *Cooking Light* columnist, and author of many books, including *How To Cook Everything—The Basics*, New York

Mark Bittman has always been a whole grains guy, but he really began to embrace them about 10 years ago while working on his cookbook *How to Cook Everything Vegetarian*. "I had no intention of becoming a vegetarian," he recalls, "but I embraced the concept and started playing around with whole grains more. I became more intentional about eating them." Nowadays, Bittman has no problem getting in his three-per-day minimum, and he thinks he may know why others aren't as successful at reaching this goal. "The misconception that whole grains are hard to cook or that they take a long time probably keeps a lot of people from trying them." Here, he debunks these myths and offers a few suggestions for making grains easy to add to your daily menu.

MARK'S TOP 5 TIPS

■ Learn how to cook one grain, and you know how to cook them all.

"One thing that makes whole grains really easy is that they pretty much all cook the same way. There are some exceptions, but for the most part, they all get boiled until they're tender. If you boil them in too much water and they get tender, you drain the water off; if you boil them in too little water and they're not tender, add a little more water. There's nothing easier."

- **Cook in batches for meals in a minute.** "Once or twice a week I usually boil a batch of whole grains, pack them into a Tupperware container, and stick it in my refrigerator. Just dip into that stash when you want to add some chew, flavor, and fiber to your meal."
- **Substitute grains for meat.** "It's fine to make polenta or brown rice pilaf and have them next to what you're eating for dinner—but I think

Cook grains in bulk, then store them in airtight containers. Use as bases for meals all week.



they're equally good stirred into existing dishes, such as chilis, vegetable soups, or stews. Whole grains in soups and stews, even in nominal amounts, add a nice, meaty element. I recently made a vegetarian chili using wheat berries instead of meat. It was terrific."

■ **Explore the variety of grains.** "I feel the same way about whole grains as I do about legumes: If you have this stuff on hand, you'll wind up eating it. I think wheat berries are sensational, likewise farro, kamut, and spelt. There are so many choices—long-grain brown rice, short-grain brown rice, basmati brown rice—and it's nice to have variety. Play around and see what you like."

■ **Start every day with oatmeal.** "One way to guarantee eating one whole grain every day is to have oatmeal. I've always been fascinated by Asian food, and Asian breakfasts in particular, so when I have oatmeal, I mix it with dried mushrooms, chopped celery, scallions, and soy sauce. I really like a savory breakfast. When people are repelled by that, I remind them that bacon and eggs are savory also. They just don't think of it that way."

Burgers, like our turkey-and-oat version, are great vehicles for whole grains.



- Cook one, cook them all.
- Cook in big batches
- Explore the variety
- Start your day with oatmeal

WHAT'S A SERVING OF WHOLE GRAINS?

SORRY, this is where it gets complicated. In the case of processed foods, we noted that 16 grams of whole grains is a third of your daily recommendation. But with many foods—like whole-wheat pasta—grams of whole grains won't be listed or relevant. The fact is, one serving of whole grains can look like any of the following:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, oats (in any pure form, including instant), barley (not pearly, which is a form of refining), buckwheat, farro, or wheat berries
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked 100% whole-grain (or 100% whole-wheat) pasta
- 1 slice 100% whole-grain (or 100% whole-wheat) bread
- 1 cup 100% whole-grain ready-to-eat cereal
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons whole-wheat flour (useful to know when baking)
- 3 cups popcorn, popped (yup, popcorn is a whole grain)





Recipe
Makeover

Easter Rolls *Made* Better

Hot Cross Buns! Hot Cross
Buns! Less butter, more whole
grains—baked and iced for
everyone! BY SIDNEY FRY, MS, RD



THESE RICH, SWEET YEAST BREAD delights show up every spring, fresh-baked according to English tradition on Good Friday. Topped with a cross of creamy white icing, the popable treats are more like mini cakes, filled with lots of buttery goodness, candied fruits, and warm spices. But each sweet little bun can set you back about 270 calories, and that's if you stop at just one. We wondered if we could lighten this buttery Easter favorite, while keeping all the irresistibility of the classic.

To support April's 12 Healthy Habits goal of eating more whole grains—see page 58—we blend whole-grain pastry flour into all-purpose flour for a more nutrient-dense base that still maintains a light, fluffy crumb. Golden raisins and currants are plumped in orange juice, and fresh citrus peel takes the place of sugary crystallized fruit. A touch of sweet butter maintains that moist, cakelike texture—with more than a stick less than the original. A hint of warm spices balances a sweet glaze to finish. Less heft, more flavor and fluff, these delicate Easter buns deserve attention all year.



Recipe
Makeover

Chip Chip Hooray!

The classic chocolate chip treat is made lighter and better with browned butter, dark chocolate, and whole grains. **BY SIDNEY FRY, MS, RD**



THE CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE, CRISP around the edges, soft in the middle, with gooey pockets of melty chocolate, is an almost perfect treat. And it's hardly a huge nutrition offender at just 200 or so calories per cookie. But who can eat just one? Or, put another way, what if you can have the pleasures of the classic with about half the fat and calories? That's what we have delivered here, even sneaking in a few whole grains. And we did not skimp on the rich, buttery cookie or the essential minimum chip-per-cookie ratio.

The butter is browned to draw out a deeper, richer flavor. Saturated fat is cut by swapping in a little canola oil, which soaks up that browned-buttery goodness. Whole-wheat flour gives a nutty twist, and a pinch of salt balances the sweetness of two sugars. For the chocolate lover, we blend classic semisweet chips with our new dark-chocolate favorite, Hershey's Special Dark (see this year's Taste Test Awards, page 89) for a double hit.



A BOOST OF WHOLE GRAINS

We add some whole-wheat flour to make a better, more nutrient-dense treat.

PH: CINDY BARR

Quinoa Combos for 250 Calories

Fear not this grain: Quinoa is fast-cooking and makes tasty salads. You can cook on Sunday, chill, eat over the next few days, and tote to work. BY SIDNEY FRY, MS, RD



THE NUTTY MOROCCAN
3 tablespoons cooked chickpeas + 1/4 cup grated fresh carrot + 2 teaspoons toasted pine nuts + 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

RISE & SHINE
1/4 cup fresh blueberries + 1 tablespoon chopped toasted walnuts + 2 teaspoons brown sugar + 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

FRESH & DILL-ICIOUS
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice + 2 tablespoons dried currants + 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill + 1/4 cup fresh squash ribbons + 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

HEIRLOOMS & AVOCADOS
1/2 cup heirloom cherry tomatoes + 1/4 cup sliced avocado + 3 tablespoons fresh cilantro + 1/4 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

Start with 2/3 cup quinoa and then add your favorite combos.

ROOTS, GREENS, & SHOOTS
1/4 cup roasted sweet potato cubes + 1/2 cup fresh baby spinach + 1 tablespoon chopped toasted pecans + 1 tablespoon thinly sliced green onions

MINT FOR SUMMER
1/3 cup fresh summer corn + 1/2 ounce ricotta salata cheese + 2 tablespoons fresh mint + 1/4 cup grated yellow squash

STRAWBERRY FIELDS
1/3 cup fresh sliced strawberries + 1 tablespoon chopped toasted hazelnuts + 1/4 cup baby arugula + 1/2 ounce goat cheese, crumbled

RED, WHITE, & GREEN CRUNCH
1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh radishes + 2 tablespoons thinly sliced snow peas + 1 ounce goat cheese, crumbled + 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

WHY QUINOA IS SO GOOD

Ready in about 20 minutes, whole-grain, and gluten-free. Here's how 1/3 cup compares to other whole grains.

Quinoa
148 calories, 5.4g protein, 3.5g fiber

Brown Rice
144 calories, 3.4g protein, 2.3g fiber

Farro
133 calories, 5.3g protein, 4.7g fiber

Barley
129 calories, 2.4g protein, 4g fiber

Bulgur
101 calories, 3.7g protein, 5.5g fiber

PHOTOGRAPHY: RANDY MAYOR AND MANDIE MILLS, FOOD STYLING: KELLIE GERBER KELLEY AND BLAKESLEE WRIGHT, PROP STYLING: CINDY BARR

Whole-Grain Fast Food

March 29, 2012 | By [Sidney Fry](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)



Like

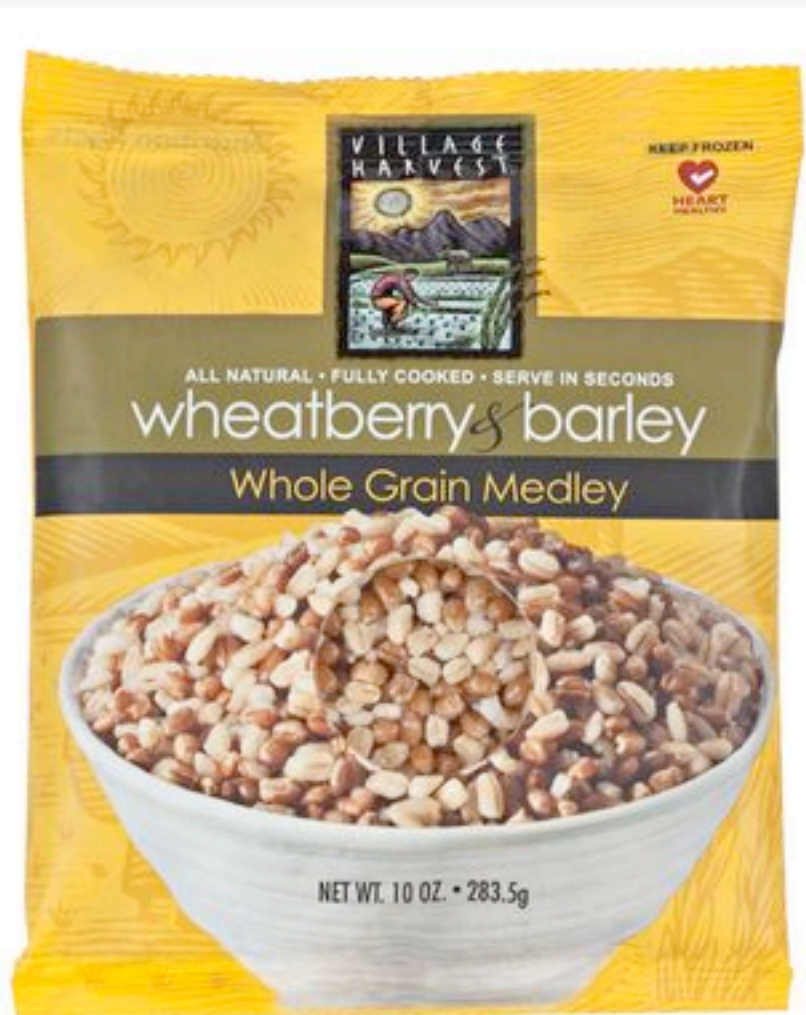


Be the first of your friends to like this.

A “fast food” that’s whole grain *and* better than sliced bread?

Yes, it’s possible. And in my opinion, a perfectly cooked whole grain that’s ready in *less than a minute* is hands down better than sliced bread. I’d rather take my bread in a loaf anyway... it doesn’t dry out as quickly, and I have the freedom to slice my bread as ultra thin (for, say, crostini) or uber thick (for those yummy open-faced sandwiches) as I please. Not to mention that it takes about 30 seconds to slice a loaf of bread. Precooked grains, on the other hand, can save me over an hour, and that’s not counting cooling time.

I’d like to introduce you to [Village Harvest Frozen Whole Grains](#). These tasty little time-savers are precooked and frozen at super low temperatures, in a flash-freezing process called cryogenic technology. This process freezes the grains in “suspended animation” (sounds cool, huh?), which



Steel-Cut Oatmeal

Oatmeal has become trendy everywhere from the drive-through to high-end breakfast spots because it's the ultimate hearty, healthy breakfast: full of fiber and protein.

/ GRAND PRIZE WINNER / **Bob's Red Mill Organic Whole Grain:** Pleasantly chewy with complex flavor that stands up to any add-ons (try a sprinkling of dried fruit or nuts). The distinctive grains had a rice-like texture that, when cooked, reminded one tester of risotto.

/ TASTE TEST AWARD / **Arrowhead Mills:** Yields a thick, delicious bowl that you'll want to loosen up with low-fat milk.

/ TASTE TEST AWARD / **Hodgson Mill:** A nutty whole-grain flavor and texture with the right amount of bite make for a filling start to the day.



PHOTOGRAPHY (TOP LEFT): TRAVIS BATHKOME; FOOD STYLING: ED GABRIELS; PROP STYLING: THOM DRIVER

TASTE TEST AWARDS



THE GROCERY WINNERS



Spaghetti *(whole-wheat)*

★ GRAND PRIZE WINNER: **Gia Russa.**

With a wheaty goodness reminiscent of brown rice, this sturdy noodle begs for a hearty sauce like puttanesca or Bolognese (see page 112).

★ TASTE TEST AWARDS: **Raccontu.**

True wheat flavor, but there's nothing grainy about the texture. Pair with bold, chunky sauces.

Target Archer Farms. Great for those just starting down the whole-wheat pasta path. A subtler flavor for subtler sauces—basic marinara would be perfect.

Shredded Wheat Cereal (Unfrosted)

/ GRAND PRIZE WINNER /

Kashi Autumn Wheat: Its cinnamon and brown sugar combo complements the whole-wheat bite of the biscuit. Nice pillowy consistency.

/ TASTE TEST AWARD /

Kellogg's Unfrosted Mini-Wheats: A texture rock star. Nice loud crunch and a real depth to the spun wheat.

/ TASTE TEST AWARD /

Post Honey Nut: Honey lends snackability and makes it a good kid-friendly option. Great crunch.

