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SHAPE

Break Out of Your Brown Rice Rut

Seven healthy whole grain alternatives

Cynthia Sass, MPH, RD



Whole grains are hot but when I review my clients' food journals I tend to see the same few selections over and over again, oats, brown rice, and whole-wheat pasta. While they're each great options, expanding your variety of whole grains can expose your body to a broader spectrum of nutrients and add a little excitement to your meals. Here are seven more whole grain choices to add to your meal repertoire and my favorite ways to enjoy them:

Barley

If you've ever enjoyed barley soup you know how hearty and filling this delicious grain is, and it has an impressive history. Barley is one of the most ancient grains—Egyptians buried mummies with necklaces made of barley. Nutritionally speaking, barley is the highest fiber whole grain, and its natural substances have been shown to help reduce cholesterol (even more than oats) and boost immunity by feeding the "good" bacteria in your digestive tract.

Eat More:

- **Upping your whole-grain intake is a speedy way to improve your diet**

No Grain, No Gain

BY CYNTHIA SASS, MPH, RD, CSSD

No supermarket food is hotter than whole grains. According to a 2011 report from the Food Marketing Institute, the most sought-after health claims on food packages today relate to benefits of whole grains. And store selections are growing: The number of new whole-grain foods on the market jumped nearly 20-fold between 2000 and 2010, to more than 3,200 new products. But the hard truth is the average intake of whole grains in the U.S. is less than one serving per day; and less than 10 percent of Americans eat the recommended

minimum three daily servings.

When I see whole grains in my clients' food journals, I tend to see the same three selections—oats, brown rice and whole-wheat pasta. While each is great, expanding your variety and hitting the three-a-day goal can expose your body to a broader spectrum of nutrients. It can also give you a competitive edge by transforming your body composition. A Tufts University study found that whole-grain eaters carry less visceral fat, the type of belly fat stored under the abdominal wall.

Here are five whole-grain choices to add to your menus and ways to enjoy them....

Barley

Barley is the highest-fiber whole grain. Its natural substances have been shown to help reduce cholesterol (even more than oats) and boost immunity by feeding the "good" bacteria in your digestive tract. Swap in barley for brown rice as a side dish, or enjoy it as an oatmeal alternative at breakfast.

Bulgur

Bulgur is typically made from durum wheat. It's high in fiber and cooks quickly, making it a convenient whole-grain option for healthy-in-a-hurry meals. If you've ever had tabbouleh, you've enjoyed bulgur, but it's also great in place of rice in pilafs, sprinkled onto a garden salad, or baked into such desserts as cakes and cookies.

Kañiwa

This relative of quinoa is high in protein, minerals and antioxidants but about half the size, so it cooks in about 15 minutes and can be enjoyed hot or cold. It works well in stuffed peppers, or chilled and layered parfait-style with nonfat, organic Greek yogurt, fresh fruit, chopped nuts and such spices as ginger and cinnamon.

Rye

Some research shows that rye is more satiating than wheat. A recent animal study found that compared to wheat, mice fed whole-grain rye had a greater reduction in body weight, slightly improved insulin control and lower total cholesterol levels. Look for crackers made with whole-grain rye or rye flakes, which can be used in place of rolled oats as a hot cereal (as well as a cold cereal), or toasted and sprinkled on top of fruit salad.

Cynthia Sass is the author of S.A.S.S. Yourself Slim: Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds, and Lose Inches. The nutrition consultant to Major League Baseball's Tampa Bay Rays and the National Hockey League's New York Rangers, she works with a wide range of athletes, including tennis players, as a board-certified specialist in sports dietetics.



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DROP POUNDS
AND LOSE INCHES

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COAUTHOR OF *FLAT BELLY DIET!*

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Chickpea and Red Quinoa Lettuce Wraps

Produce: 5 large outer romaine leaves and 1 medium vine-ripened or plum tomato, diced

Whole grain: ½ cup cooked red quinoa, chilled

Lean protein: ½ cup chickpeas

Plant-based fat: 10 large black olives, sliced

SASS: 1 tablespoon lemon juice and ½ teaspoon minced garlic

Toss the quinoa, chickpeas, tomatoes, and olives with the lemon juice and garlic. Fill the romaine leaves with the mixture, and serve.

Peppery Broad Beans over Vegetable Barley

Produce: 1 small red pepper, sliced into strips; 1 cup fresh spinach; and ¼ cup low-sodium vegetable broth

Whole grain: ½ cup cooked barley

Lean protein: ½ cup canned, rinsed broad beans (fava beans)

Plant-based fat: 1 tablespoon jarred basil pesto

SASS: Crushed red pepper and ¼ teaspoon ground white pepper

Toss the broad beans with the pesto, and set aside. On the stove top over medium heat, sauté the peppers in the broth with crushed red pepper and ground white pepper, until the peppers are tender. Add the spinach, stirring until wilted. Spread a plate with the barley, and top with the vegetables and broad beans.

