

You can add whole grains to your meals without cooking, simply by choosing breads, breakfast cereals, and other prepared whole grain foods. If you'd like to enjoy delicious whole grains at home as a side dish, however, here are some guidelines for cooking them from scratch.

1 Cup of Grain	Water	Cook Time	Cooked Amount
Amaranth	2 cups	20–25 minutes	3½ cups
Barley, hulled	3 cups	45–60 minutes	3½ cups
Buckwheat	2 cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Bulgur	2 cups	10–12 minutes	3 cups
Cornmeal (polenta)	4 cups	25–30 minutes	2½ cups
Couscous, whole wheat	2 cups	10 minutes (heat off)	3 cups
Kamut®	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook for 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Millet, hulled	2½ cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Oats, steel cut	4 cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Pasta, whole wheat	6 cups	8–12 minutes (varies by size)	varies
Quinoa	2 cups	12–15 minutes	3+ cups
Brown Rice	2½ cups	45 minutes (varies by variety)	3–4 cups
Rye berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Sorghum	4 cups	25–40 minutes	3 cups
Spelt berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Teff	3 cups	For porridge: Toast: 3 min. Simmer: 15–20 min.	3 cups
Wheat berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45–60 minutes	3 cups
Wild Rice	3 cups	45–55 minutes	3½ cups

NUTTIER, FULLER FLAVOR

Whole grains are generally chewier than refined grains and have a nuttier, fuller flavor. You and your family may find this unfamiliar at first. But after a month or two, refined grains may start to taste very plain and uninteresting by contrast. Stick with it until your palate adjusts, and reap the health benefits.



PLAIN GRAINS, GENERAL DIRECTIONS

Cooking most grains is very similar to cooking rice. You put the dry grain in a pan with water or broth, bring it to a boil, then simmer until the liquid is absorbed. Pasta is generally cooked in a larger amount of water; the excess is drained away after cooking. Don't be intimidated!

PASTA METHOD

Some grains, like brown rice, farro, and wheat berries, can be cooked using the “pasta method,” where uncooked whole grains are placed in a large pot of boiling water, boiled until tender, then drained of their excess liquid. America's Test Kitchen found that this process significantly speeds up cooking (taking brown rice from 60 minutes to 35).

SHORTCUTS

- **SOAKING:** If you want to cook grains more quickly, let them sit in the allotted amount of water for a few hours before cooking. Just before dinner, add extra water if necessary, then cook. You'll find that cooking time is much shorter with a little pre-soaking.
- **PRE-COOKING:** For steel-cut oats, try this shortcut: Bring water and oats to a boil, then turn off the heat and let the oats soak overnight. In the morning, return the oats to a boil, and they'll soften much quicker. (This approach is similar to the “two-step” cooking method popularized in Maria Speck's cook-book, *Simply Ancient Grains*.)
- **BATCH COOKING:** Another shortcut is to cook whole grains in big batches. Grains keep 3-4 days in your fridge and take just minutes to warm up with a little added water or broth. You can also use the leftovers for cold salads (just toss with chopped veggies, dressing, and anything else that suits your fancy), or toss a few handfuls in some canned soup. Cook once, then take it easy.
- **QUICK COOKING:** There are also many quick-cooking grains on the market, both in the freezer aisle and the grain aisle. These grains have been pre-cooked so some are ready in as little as 90 seconds in the microwave.

STICKY BOTTOMS

If whole grains are sticking to the bottom of the pan, turn off the heat, add a very small amount of liquid, put a lid on the pan, and let it sit a few minutes. The grain will loosen, easing serving and cleanup.

IMPORTANT: TIME VARIES

Grains can vary in cooking time depending on the age of the grain, the variety, and the pans you're using to cook. When you decide they're tender and tasty, they're done! If the grain is not as tender as you like when “time is up,” simply add more water and continue cooking. Or, if everything seems fine before the liquid is all absorbed, simply drain the excess.

