WHOLE GRAINS COUNCIL
Whole Grains at Every Meal

Cooking & Eating Whole Grains

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.

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!

GRAIN PILAF, GENERAL DIRECTIONS

Brown small bits of onion, mushroom and garlic in a little oil in a saucepan. Add grain and cook briefly, coating the grains in oil. Then add broth in the amount specified below, and cook until liquid is absorbed.

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.

SHORTCUTS

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.

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.

There are also many quick-cooking grain side-dishes on the market, even including 90-second brown rice. These grains have been pre-cooked so you only need to cook them briefly or simply warm them through 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, stick a lid on the pan, and let it sit a few minutes. The grain will loosen, easing serving and cleanup.

See next page, for a handy table detailing cooking times for various grains →

COOKING WHOLE GRAINS

To 1 cup of this grain…	Add this much water or broth:	Bring to a boil, then simmer for:	Amount after cooking
Amaranth	2 cups	20-25 minutes	3 1/2 cups
Barley, hulled	3 cups	45-60 minutes	3 1/2 cups
Buckwheat	2 cups	20 minutes	4 cups
Bulgur	2 cups	10-12 minutes	3 cups
Cornmeal (polenta)	4 cups	25-30 minutes	2 1/2 cups
Couscous, whole wheat	2 cups	10 min. (heat off)	3 cups
Kamut® grain	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45-60 minutes	3 cups
Millet, hulled	2 1/2 cups	25-35 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
Rice, brown	2 1/2 cups	25-45 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
Wheat berries	4 cups	Soak overnight, then cook 45-60 minutes	3 cups
Wild rice	3 cups	45-55 minutes	3 1/2 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.