
COOKING WITH GRAINS

The Most Important Food

Grains represent the most important single item in the diet. For many nations, grains in some form represent the main dish at all meals. Because of the high quality of nutrients, we can expect that eating grains will bring better disposition, greater ambition, increased ability for work production, and greater happiness. With all of these benefits, it is important to study carefully how grains can be used in our menus.

Two Mistakes

Two features of processing grains diminish their wholesomeness: (1) the polishing, and (2) failure to cook a sufficient length of time. Grains grow in such a way that the vitamins and minerals are carried almost entirely on the outer layer. Milling generally removes this layer, leaving a white, easily ground, central kernel, which is almost devoid of vitamins and minerals. The central portion has the starch and the protein, but both of these are more difficult to metabolize without the accompanying minerals and vitamins. The B vitamins are required in the metabolism of starches and sugars. Many of the minerals found in grains are required in the metabolism of protein. We can easily see that grains are made to order when used as a whole grain, but become less efficient in the body metabolism when polished. Bleaching flour is another thief of vitamins and minerals.

Long, Slow Cooking

Many people fail to cook grains long enough to denature phytates and to release the chemical bondages holding the nutrient molecules. Our digestion is not strong enough to split completely many molecules in grains, thereby causing some distress in the colon from gas or acids. We may also fail to receive all the nutrients possible from the whole grains. The harder grains need more than an hour of cooking, preferably several hours of slow cooking.

The Real Staff of Life

There are a number of grains, each having distinctive chemical characteristics and flavor qualities. A whole new world of eating experiences come with each line of grain. Rice, for instance, can be cooked out dry and used with a number of sauces, spreads, gravies and soups. By simply increasing both the cooking time and the amount of water, the end product is creamy and can be used as a porridge for breakfast; can be congealed, sliced and baked; or can be shaped while still hot into patties after seasoning with a variety of herbs and "vegebits". Grind rice into a coarse flour, wet it with enough water to stick together, make it sweet or savory by adding your favorite seasonings and nuts, put on a prepared stainless steel mixing bowl, steam for 2-3 hours and have "rice cake". For each grain the number of different cooking styles are as varied as the number of grains. A cookbook with a good section on grains is a valuable asset to any kitchen, as valuable as the stove and blender. We suggest EAT FOR STRENGTH, Thrash.

The Grains

BARLEY: This grain grinds into a very fine, white flour which can be used to make white gravies and to vary whole grain breads. It must be used with wheat to make a light, yeast bread. It is high in malt and has a delightful, mild flavor. When dextrinized before use, the flavor is enriched.

BUCKWHEAT: This seed is actually not one of the grains, but because of its nutrient makeup is widely used in the same fashion as grains. It has a fairly strong flavor, and when used whole or as a flour, it is well to mix it with one of the more bland grains such as corn, rice or millet. It has a high biologic value, being rich in vitamins and minerals. It deserves much greater popularity than just as buckwheat griddle cakes.

CORN: Corn was first grown in North America, and continues to be our most widely used grain in this hemisphere. Being a large grain on a large ear, it grows luxuriantly and is an important seed crop. When used in rotation with other grains, it is an important nutrient. It should be considered, as with all the grains, to be one among many, and not a steady diet. Corn can be used in the "milk stage" as whole kernel or cream corn, and served as a vegetable in the menu. It has many uses as hotcakes, griddle cakes, waffles, mixed with soybean flour to make raised cornbread, chapatis, Fritos, enchiladas and tortillas. By using as a coarse grind, grits are produced which can be used in a variety of ways: (1) breakfast porridge, (2) congealed porridge sliced and baked, (3) mixed with other grains, etc. Serving grits can be as varied as the imagination, the classic way in the South being as "grits and gravy". A variety of fruit sauces, numerous nut or soy spreads such as peanut butter or margarine, soyonnaise, soy sour cream, etc., are delicious with grits.

MILLET: Millet is a cereal commonly used in Europe and has gained much popularity in this hemisphere. It has a bland flavor and can be used in the same way as corn or rice. It grows well without abundant rainfall and should be developed as a commercial grain.

OATS: This is one of our more common cereal grains of quite high biologic value. It can be used as the whole grain, the other forms can be cooked as breakfast foods, or used to give body to casserole dishes and stews and to make patties or burgers. This important grain has many uses, and should not be thought of merely as "oatmeal".

RICE: The most important grain in the economy of the Orient, rice has kept much of China alive and healthy for the last three centuries. Not until polishing the grain became a common practice did nutritional deficiencies exist in China. It has a very high quality protein and many essential vitamins and minerals. One who is on a varied diet of fruits and vegetables will have his diet completed by brown rice.

RYE: This hardy cereal grain is widely grown for its grain as well as its straw. It makes a quick-growing pasture or lawn grass in some of its species. The flour made from rye should be used to vary the nutritive content of breads, to make gravies, and to thicken soups and casserole dishes. Very delightful breakfast cereals using Swedish recipes are available. (see EAT FOR STRENGTH, Thrash).

WHEAT: There are many grains in this group of cereal grasses. Each of the different species has a somewhat different amino acid content as well as vitamin and mineral spectrum. Generally, when bread is spoken of, one thinks of wheat bread. Like rice, it has been subjected to a great injustice in that the major nutritive properties are removed in the milling process for the production of a finer flour and a product that will keep for a long period on the grocery shelf. The long-keeping quality of white flour is due to the separation of the rich vitamin and mineral bearing oils which are likely to become rancid. Bugs do not readily attack the white flour products, for bugs instinctively recognize that the product is inferior and will not support their lives. We recommend whole wheat flour as opposed to white flour.