



Green Plate Kids
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What are “whole grains” and where can I find them?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 were just released this week and one of the key recommendations for improving diet in our country is to get more whole grains into our diet. The Whole Grains Council (yes, there is one) defines whole grains as the following:

Whole grains or foods made from them contain all the essential parts and naturally-occurring nutrients of the entire grain seed. If the grain has been processed (e.g., cracked, crushed, rolled, extruded, and/or cooked), the food product should deliver approximately the same rich balance of nutrients that are found in the original grain seed.

Cereal grains, such as rice, wheat, oats and corn, contain three main parts: the bran, the germ and the endosperm. As a food is refined, the fibrous outer layers, including the bran and the germ, are stripped away. Unfortunately, all the fiber and most of the nutrients reside in those outer layers and we are left with a nutrient deficient endosperm that helps create fluffy white breads and other baked goods. These treats may taste good but once they leave your mouth for the inner workings of your body, there is very little of redeeming value. In fact, Americans consume almost one third of their total caloric intake from these types of food. When we fill up on high calorie items that have little nutritive value, we leave little opportunity to get the nutrients our bodies need to function well and keep us healthy. The result is a population that is overweight and malnourished.

The latest recommendation is that Americans consume at least half of their daily intake of grain-based foods as whole grains. There are many ways to get your daily dose. Start by replacing white rice with brown, whole wheat flour for white and steel cut oats for the sugar-sweetened instant packet. When looking at packages goods, be sure to read the ingredients. If the first ingredient does not say **whole** grain (wheat, oat, etc.), the food is unlikely to be a good source of whole grains. Even better is to find ingredients that say 100% whole grain.

There are other wonderful grains that are used all over the world that can add variety of taste, textures and nutrients to your diet. These include quinoa, amaranth, barley, millet, buckwheat and more. They take no more time or effort to prepare than pasta or rice and can be used in the same manner as pasta and rice. The recipe below from the National Barley Foods Council (yes, there is one of those too) is a great way to incorporate a new grain into your life. Happy Eating!





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Baked Chicken with Apples and Barley

From the National Barley Foods Council

Makes 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 medium tart green apple, chopped
1-2 tablespoons curry powder
1 cup whole grain barley kernels
2-1/2 cups chicken broth
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1/2 teaspoon garlic salt (or a little minced garlic)
3 tablespoons orange marmalade or apricot jam

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oil in large skillet; sauté onion, bell peppers and garlic 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. Add chopped apple and curry powder; sauté 4 minutes longer.
3. Stir in barley and chicken broth; bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 20-25 minutes.
4. Pour barley mixture into large baking dish or casserole. Arrange chicken breasts over barley and season with garlic salt. Cover and bake in 375° F oven for 45 minutes. Remove cover; brush chicken with marmalade. Continue to bake, uncovered, 15 minutes longer. Remove from oven and let stand 5 minutes before serving.

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