



Nutrition News - September 2025

September is Whole Grains Month

In today's fast-paced world, making informed and healthy food choices is more important than ever. The MyPlate initiative, introduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), serves as a practical guide to help us create balanced meals that contribute to overall health and well-being.

Among the various food groups highlighted by MyPlate, grains hold a particularly significant place. These versatile staples form the foundation of many diets worldwide and play a crucial role in providing our bodies with the energy required to thrive. Grains are packed with essential nutrients, including carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, which collectively support various bodily functions. From maintaining healthy digestion and cholesterol to regulating blood sugar levels and fueling our daily activities, grains are indispensable to a balanced and nutritious diet.

Does your diet include enough whole grains?

In this month's *Nutrition News*, we'll provide useful information, practical tips, and easy, large-print recipes that you can use to make sure you're getting enough whole grains. Check the back page for the recipes.

What's a Whole Grain?

In the life cycle of plants, the whole grain is the seed (or kernel) from which a new plant grows. Nutrients in the seed supply nourishment for the plant before it forms roots to draw from the soil and surroundings.

A whole grain consists of three parts: bran, endosperm, and germ. The bran is the outer, protective layer of the grain, and supplies antioxidants, B vitamins and dietary fiber. The endosperm is the inner, largest part of the grain. It contains most of the proteins and carbohydrates, and only a small amount of vitamins and minerals.

The germ is also an inner part of the kernel. While small in size, it has an important role because it sprouts and generates a new plant. It contains the B vitamins, vitamin E, antioxidants, trace minerals and essential fats. The bran and germ of a whole grain supply most of its fiber.

A food is considered to be made with or from whole grains as long as the grain contains the bran, endosperm and germ in the same ratio as it does in nature. Whole-grain foods can be made from wheat, rye, rice, oats, cornmeal, and barley, among others.

Whole grains can be found in bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits. Sometimes, though, these foods are also made with refined grains, or a combination of both.

According to the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, adults age 60 years and older should aim to have 3 ounces per day of whole grains, for a dietary intake between 1,600 and 2,000 calories.

Replace refined-grain products with whole grains when you can rather than adding more to your daily intake. Good examples include eating brown rice instead of white rice, or whole wheat bread instead of white bread.

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Dutchess County Office for the Aging • 114 Delafield St., Poughkeepsie NY 12601
845-486-2555 • toll free 866-486-2555 • dutchessny.gov/aging

Todd N. Tancredi
Director, Office for the Aging

Nimesh Bhargava, MS, RD, CDN
Nutrition Services Coordinator

Sue Serino
County Executive

Recipe: Whole Grain Banana Bread

Ingredients:

3 ripe medium bananas, peeled, mashed
 1/2 cup milk or soy milk, plain, unsweetened
 1/4 cup vegetable oil
 2 Tbsp. chia seeds
 1 tsp. vanilla
 1/4 cup brown sugar
 1 1/4 cups whole-wheat flour
 1 tsp. baking soda
 1/2 tsp. baking powder
 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
 Pinch salt (optional)
 2 Tbsp. sunflower seeds
 2 Tbsp. coconut, unsweetened, shredded
 2 Tbsp. sliced almonds
 3 Tbsp. pistachio nuts
 3 Tbsp. chopped walnuts
 Nonstick cooking spray

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- In mixing bowl, whip together bananas, soy milk, vegetable oil, chia seeds, vanilla and sugar for two minutes. For best results, use an electric mixer.
- Stir in remaining ingredients, mixing only until well combined.
- Spray loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray.
- Pour batter into loaf pan and bake for about 65 minutes, until fork inserted in center comes out clean.
- Remove, cool slightly before slicing.

Makes 12 servings (1 slice). Per serving: 221 calories, 13 g total fat (2 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat), 25 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein, 5 g dietary fiber, 60 mg sodium, 9 g sugar, 0 g added sugar.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

Recipe: Whole Grain Pita Pizza

Makes 2 servings • 2 round 6-7" whole wheat pitas

Ingredients:

6 oz spaghetti sauce (~1/4 of a typical jar)
 3 oz part-skim shredded mozzarella cheese (you can shred your own, too)
 1 cup chopped vegetables (onions, peppers, mushrooms, spinach, olives—your choice)
 Drizzle of olive oil

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Spread half the sauce on each pita round. If you're using chopped fresh spinach, add it now, before the cheese, so it won't dry out too much.
- Top with cheese, divided between the two pizzas, and then vegetables.
- Drizzle with oil.
- Bake for 15 minutes on a pizza pan or cookie sheet.

Much healthier than store or restaurant pizza because you have a whole-grain crust, plenty of vegetables and a reasonable amount of cheese. Add small bits of Italian chicken or turkey sausage if you like. Kids love to decorate their own pizzas!

Source: Whole Grains Council