

# Celebrate Whole Grains Month in September



September 2010

*Find out why whole grains are better than refined grains and how you can add more whole grains to your diet.*

*Hailed as the “staff of life” for their historical importance to human survival, grains are an essential part of a healthy diet. Grains, also known as cereals, are the seeds of grasses which are cultivated for food. They come in many shapes and sizes, from large kernels of popcorn to small quinoa seeds.*

*All types of grains are good sources of complex carbohydrates, various vitamins and minerals, and are naturally low in fat. The best grains for you are those that haven’t been refined — called whole grains. Whole grains are better sources of fiber and other important nutrients such as selenium, potassium and magnesium. So whenever you can, choose whole grains over refined grains.*

## Whole grains vs. refined grains

A slice of commercially prepared white bread has 66 calories, 1.9 grams of protein and 0.6 grams of fiber. A slice of whole wheat bread has 69 calories and provides 3.6 grams of protein and 1.9 grams of fiber. It isn’t hard to see which one is the better nutritional bet.

Whole grains haven’t had their bran and germ removed by milling, making them good sources of fiber; the part of plant-based foods that your body doesn’t digest. Among many health benefits, high fiber foods also tend to make you feel full longer.

Refined grains, such as white rice or white flour, have both the bran and germ removed from the grain. Although vitamins and minerals are added back into refined grains after the milling process, they still don’t have as many nutrients as whole grains do— and they don’t provide as much fiber naturally.

## What Can You Do?

Whole Grains Month is a great time for everyone to get on the whole grains bandwagon. Eating better is not an all-or-nothing choice; every little improvement you make in your food helps.

Post this list of “baby steps” on your fridge, and try as many as possible this month:

- I’ll buy three different loaves of whole grain bread and taste all of them to see which one we like best.
- I’ll serve bulgur or brown rice instead of potatoes with dinner one night this month.
- I’ll look for the Whole Grain Stamp every time I shop.
- I’ll try a new breakfast cereal with at least 16 grams of whole grain per serving.
- I’ll buy some whole wheat pasta and try it.
- I’ll visit the health food store or a major grocery and look at all the different grains in bins.
- I’ll make my favorite whole grain recipe for a friend.
- On the weekend, I’ll try cooking a pot of steel-cut oatmeal.
- I’ll make pizza for the kids with whole wheat pita as the crust.
- I’ll make our favorite cookies with whole wheat flour next time instead of white flour.
- I’ll serve hamburgers with whole wheat buns this week.

Source: Mayo Clinic