



# Fact Sheet

## Serve More Whole Grains for Healthier School Meals

### KEY ISSUES:

- Whole grains contain fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- Whole grains may reduce the risk of several chronic diseases including coronary heart disease, and may help maintain a healthy weight.
- The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend we consume at least half of our grains as whole grains (3 or more ounce-equivalents per day).
- Offer one or more whole-grain products every day in your school meals.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has developed draft guidance on whole-grain label statements. At this time, foodservice personnel should still read the ingredient statement on grain products and choose those with whole grains as the first ingredient.

Although some students may not be familiar with the color, taste, and texture of whole grains and whole-grain products, they can enjoy these good-for-you foods if you gradually add them to your menus.

### Recognizing Whole Grains Is Easy!

Read the *ingredient statement* for the products you purchase. Manufacturers must list ingredients in descending order by weight. Look for products that list whole grains first. If your students aren't used to eating whole grains, start with products that list whole grains further down the list and make a plan to gradually offer more whole grains throughout the school year.

For many whole grains, the word "whole" usually is listed before the type of grain, such as "whole-wheat flour," "whole durum flour," "whole-grain barley," "whole cornmeal," or "whole white wheat." Other ways to identify whole grains are:

- Some whole grains have a *standard of identity* and do not include the word "whole," such as "cracked wheat," "crushed wheat," and "graham flour."
- The term "berries" or "groats" indicate a whole, unrefined grain – for example, rye berries or buckwheat groats.
- Rolled oats, oatmeal, brown rice, brown rice flour, and wild rice are also whole grains.

Easy ways to follow the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

### Recipe for Success

- **Compare Nutrition Facts labels and the ingredient lists** for similar foods. Choose the food with whole grains as the first ingredient. Check the Nutrition Facts label for the lowest amount of *trans* fat, saturated fat, sugar, sodium, and cholesterol. Some manufacturers add whole grains to foods that otherwise are not good choices for students. For example, some grain products contain a lot of added sugars (sucrose, honey, high-fructose corn syrup, glucose, or corn sweetener). Choose these products less often.





## USDA Commodity Food Program

Schools can order brown rice, rolled oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain dry kernel corn (for processing), and whole-grain pastas (spaghetti and rotini) through the USDA Commodity Food Program. For a list of available whole-grain items, visit FNS' Web site: [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/foods\\_available.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/foods_available.htm)

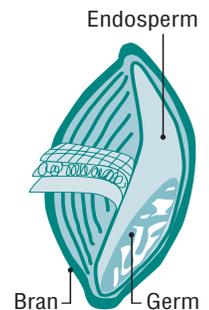
- **Introduce whole grains** in popular products like pizza crust, breads and rolls, hamburger buns, pasta, mixed dishes such as meatballs, and breakfast foods. For more variety, include some less common whole grains and offer different whole-grain products to your students.
- **Write specifications that clearly describe the product** you want to offer. If possible, buy products that contain whole grain as the primary ingredient by weight.
- **Modify recipes to add more whole grains.** For example, start with smaller amounts of whole-wheat flour (33 percent) in your favorite roll recipe and work up to at least 51 percent. Share your recipes with other schools to help them offer their students tasty, nutritious whole-grain products.
- **Continue to offer some enriched grain products,** which are fortified with folic acid, an important nutrient for our diets.
- **Suggest Food Service Management Companies use the above tips** when writing specifications, and preparing or selecting grain products for menus.

## Messages for Students

- Make half your grains whole!
- Try something new – whole-grain pasta or brown rice pilaf.
- Be “label able” – Look for whole grains in the ingredient statement and choose foods that list whole grains first.
- Choose a whole-grain cereal for breakfast!

## Did You Know?

**Whole Grains** consist of the entire cereal grain seed or kernel. The kernel has three parts—the bran, the germ, and the endosperm. Usually the kernel is cracked, crushed, or flaked during the milling process. If the finished product retains the same relative proportions of bran, germ, and endosperm as the original grain, it is considered a whole grain.



**Refined grains** are milled to remove part or all of the bran and/or germ. Most refined grains are “enriched” to add back some of the iron, thiamine, niacin, and riboflavin that were lost in the milling process. Enriched grains also have folic acid added to increase this important nutrient in our diets.

**Terms that indicate refined grains, not whole grains:** flour, enriched flour, wheat flour, bread flour, durum flour, grits, hominy, farina, semolina, cornmeal, degerminated cornmeal, corn flour, rice, rice flour, couscous, pearly barley, Scotch barley, pot barley.

## For more information:

[MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov)

[www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flgragui.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flgragui.html)

Contact the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI) at [www.nfsmi.org](http://www.nfsmi.org) or 1-800-321-3054, if you have questions about whole grains, need recipes or additional information.



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