

# ORGANIC LIVING

By

Robert Rodale

## Eat Wheat Germ: It's Naturally Enriched

Eating enriched white bread is like being robbed of \$100, getting back \$50, and being told that you are better off than when you started. The rate of return may soon be raised, but the nutritional sleight of hand will continue.

The National Research Council's Food and Nutrition Board recently recommended that all foods made of wheat, corn and rice be synthetically enriched with 10 essential nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin B6, folic acid, calcium, magnesium and zinc. Everything from bread and breakfast cereals to corn chips and macaroni would be affected.

Back in 1940, the same group was responsible for the present enrichment of our flour and bread with three B vitamins and iron. That fortification failed, however. Significant numbers of Americans are still suffering from vitamin and mineral deficiencies. That's because enrichment, by its very nature, is a compromise, returning only a handful of the dozen or more nutrients stripped away when grain is milled and processed.

One recommendation made by the board does make sense, though. It urges millers to reduce the amount of refining they do to wheat to make flour white. Such processing, done only to make the flour look better in the eyes of the consumer, removes a large portion of the grain's nutritive value. The wheat germ and bran, both commonly removed, contain most of the vitamins and minerals. And bleaching, the final cosmetic touch, removes almost all of the vitamin E.

If millers would keep the wheat germ intact in flour, there wouldn't be any need for enrichment. Until the day when that unlikely event occurs, however, your best bet is to buy wheat germ and include it in your diet at every opportunity.

Compare the nutrients in one ounce of wheat germ with one ounce of so-called enriched bread, and the choice is obvious.

Wheat Germ (one oz.)	Enriched Bread (one oz.)
Thiamin 0.49 milligram	0.1 mg.
Riboflavin 0.19 mg.	0.1 mg.



Niacin 1.47 mg.	0.9 mg.
Iron 2.5 mg.	0.7 mg.

An ounce of wheat germ also contains other nutrients, including vitamins A, E, C, B6, folic acid, calcium, magnesium and trace elements needed by the body such as zinc, cobalt and molybdenum.

For years athletes searching for the perfect training food have relied on wheat germ to improve performance. And it's still being used. One of the most popular of all health foods, wheat germ is also conveniently available in almost any supermarket.

Wheat germ is a versatile food that can be used in a variety of ways, either toasted or raw. The latter is slightly preferred from a nutritional standpoint, because nothing has been lost in the heat of the toasting procedure.

You can use wheat germ to make your own granola. Combine two cups of rolled oats, one cup of sunflower seeds, a cup of sesame seeds, one-half cup of soy grits, a cup of wheat germ and one-half cup of unsweetened coconut meal.

Mix this with a cup of unsulfured raisins or a cup of prunes, apricots, or dates, and serve it with milk, fruit juice or yogurt. In fish, chicken and other recipes that call for breading you can substitute wheat germ for bread crumbs, cracker crumbs, or cornflake crumbs. A mixture of wheat germ and crushed nuts makes a good pie crust.

Try sprinkling wheat germ on apple sauce or ice cream for a special treat. And mix it into hamburgers, meat loaf and casserole dishes to give them a nutritional boost.

If your family isn't too keen on the idea of eating a "health food" like wheat germ, take a tip from Jane Kinderlehrer, author of "Confessions of a Sneaky Organic Cook":

"How do you get the wheat germ into your family's diet?" she asks. "Since it's a natural component of flour, I use it whenever I use flour. And if you rarely use flour because of the convenience of commercial packaged mixes, try adding wheat germ to the mix. If I'm having guests and am rushed for time, I might use a mix and spike it generously with wheat germ. The trick here is to run the wheat germ through the blender for a minute. This reduces it to a finer consistency so eagle eyes can't detect it."

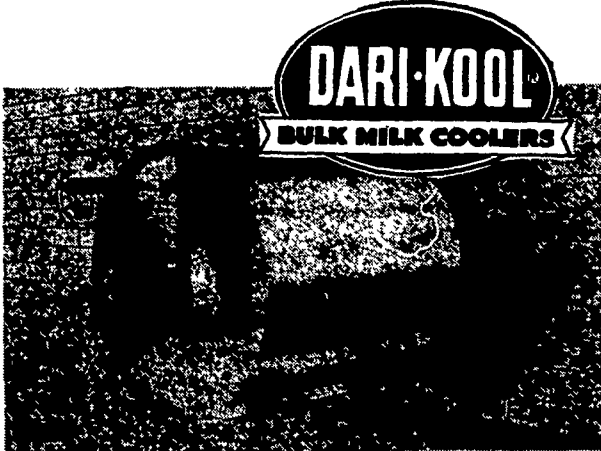
It's the funniest thing but invariably one of my guests, usually a male, will say as he reaches for a second helping, "You can't fool me—this cake wasn't made from a mix—it has that ole time flavor that just doesn't come in a box." I just make like Mona Lisa and smile—but never tell. It's better that they don't know how healthy they're getting."

(Editor's Note: The opinions appearing in "Organic Living" are those of its author, Robert Rodale, an independent columnist. Rodale's comments do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Lancaster Farming editor or anyone else on the Lancaster Farming staff.)

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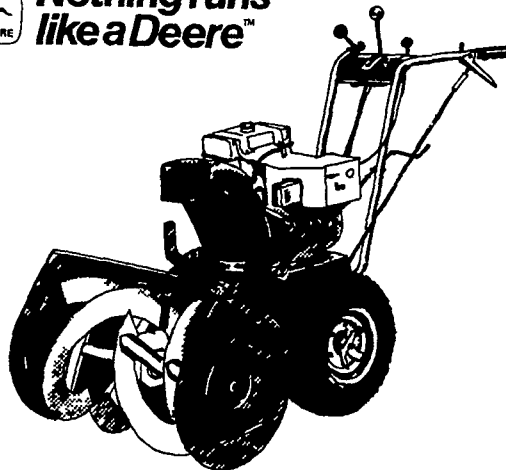
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