

Family Living

Focus

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Baking with Whole Grains

Tiny-sized snowflakes are dancing from the sky in our first northeastern storm of the season. There is no better time to turn on the oven and whip up a quick batch of bread.

If you have children at home, involve them in helping you to make it. Even toddlers can help by dumping measured ingredients into the mixing bowl and by helping with some of the mixing.

It works at our house!
You might ask yourself, why bake bread?

Maybe you made a resolution for the new millennium to eat more healthfully. Unlike the old wife's tales that abounded years earlier, we know that bread can be the foundation of a healthful diet. It's what we choose to put on it that makes it a healthy choice or adds unwanted calories. So, let's explore some whole grains to bake and cook this winter.

Many of us are familiar with whole wheat flour. Try starting a Saturday morning by mixing the ingredients for whole wheat bread. You'll love the aroma that fills your home. And you'll be providing your family with much more fiber than the bleached variety of wheat. Just one-quarter cup of whole wheat flour provides four grams of fiber! Oatmeal is also an excellent source of fiber.

Oatmeal is often known for its ability to help lower blood cholesterol by providing lots of soluble fiber. Just one serving of cooked oats provides eight grams of fiber. Oatmeal is easy to add to cookies or muffins. Let's explore some other grains that may be less familiar:

•Wild Rice—Did you know that wild rice is actually not a grain but a grass grown from seed? Traditionally, Native American Indians harvested wild rice. It is often picked, cured over smoke fires, sifted, and graded for packaging. That's why you'll find it more costly than white rice. It is very nutritious.

•Barley—Barley has been eaten since prehistoric times. It's hearty to grow and is great when added to soup. Try whipping up vegetable barley soup on one of these cold, wintry days. You can also purchase barley

rolled as you do oatmeal to use in baking breads.

•Millet—Millet is used for hay or silage and also is quite tasty as a breakfast cereal. It's slightly sweet flavor is an unusual outcome of this brightly colored gold grain.

•Cornmeal—Cornmeal is probably a more familiar grain. Cornmeal muffins are a great compliment to many meals. Cornmeal is a gift from Mexico. The corn kernel is milled to form the cornmeal.

Not only are grains fun to bake with in the winter, they are a great source of fiber. The National Cancer Institute recommends we consume 20 to 35 grams of fiber each day. Most of us consume about half of that. Soluble fiber reduces the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Oats and beans are excellent sources of soluble fiber.

Insoluble fiber is soluble fiber's counterpart. You'll find insoluble fiber in vegetables, wheat, grains, and broccoli stems. Insoluble fiber is noted for protecting against colon cancer and for providing the bulk that our bodies need to help to

keep us regular.

If you're wondering where to find some of these tasty, healthful grains check your grocery store first. If that search is not fruitful, try a local grain mill or a local health food store. Try baking or cooking with a new grain in the next two weeks. It'll be fun and healthful as well. Bon appetit!

Here's a recipe to get you started:

Cranberry Apricot Whole Wheat Muffins

- 1 cup dried apricots, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 5 tablespoons fresh orange juice
- 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1-1/4 cup all purpose flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 1-1/2 tablespoons baking powder (approximately)

1. Combine the apricots and

cranberries with 1/2 cup of the sugar and the orange juice in a medium-sized bowl. Let stand for 30 minutes.

2. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.

3. Grease a twelve-cup muffin tin.

4. Combine the flours, remaining 1/4 cup sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl.

5. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs with the butter until smooth. Stir in the cranberries, with all of their liquid. Beat in the dry ingredients. Stir in enough buttermilk to make a soft batter. Do not overbeat.

6. Fill the muffin cups about seven-eighths full. Bake until firm and golden brown, about 15 minutes.

Cool the tin on a rack for 10 minutes before unmolding the muffins.

Makes 12 muffins.
Adapted from: "The Grains Cookbook." Bert Greene, Workman, 1988.



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