

# Just the Facts!

## Serve More Whole Grains for Healthier School Meals

### KEY ISSUES:

- Whole grains contain fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Fiber helps children feel full longer.
- Whole grains may reduce the risk of several chronic diseases including coronary heart disease, and may help maintain a healthy weight.
- The MyPlate food guidance system recommends we consume at least half of our grains as whole grains (3 or more ounce-equivalents per day).
- Beginning in School Year (SY) 2012-13, at least half of grains offered at lunch must be whole-grain-rich. This is required by SY 2013-14 for breakfast. By SY 2014-15, all grains offered must be whole-grain-rich for both lunch and breakfast.

**A**lthough 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 ingredients list for the products you purchase.** Manufacturers must list ingredients in descending order by weight. Look for products that list whole grains first. For many whole grains, the word “whole” is usually 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, quinoa, and wild rice are also whole grains.

Easy ways to  
follow the 2010  
Dietary Guidelines for  
Americans

### Recipe for Success

- **Compare Nutrition Facts labels and the ingredient lists for similar foods.** Choose the food with whole grains listed 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 children. For example, some grain products contain a lot of added sugars (sucrose, honey, high fructose corn syrup, glucose, evaporated cane juice, or fruit juice concentrates). Choose these products less often.
- **Introduce whole grains in popular products** like pizza crust, breads and rolls, hamburger buns, pasta, mixed dishes such as lasagna or wraps, and breakfast foods. For more variety, include some less common whole grains and offer different whole-grain-rich products to your students.

## USDA Foods Program

Schools can order regular and quick-cooking brown rice, rolled oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain dry kernel corn (for processing), whole-grain pastas (spaghetti, elbow macaroni, and rotini), whole-grain pancakes, and whole-grain tortillas through the USDA Foods Program. To check the list of available whole-grain USDA Foods, go to the USDA Foods Toolkit at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods/healthy/Professional.htm> to review the Foods Available List for Schools.

- **Use crushed, unsweetened whole-grain cereal** or rolled oats as breading for baked fish and chicken.
- **Modify recipes to add more whole-grain-rich foods.** For example, use whole-wheat flour (50 percent) in your favorite roll recipe, or try using other whole grains, such as white whole-wheat flour, rolled oats, or oatmeal. Share your recipes with other schools to help them offer their students tasty, nutritious whole-grain products.
- **Any flour in whole-grain-rich products that is not whole grain must be enriched.** Enriched grain products are fortified with folic acid, which is an important nutrient for our diets.

**What is whole-grain-rich? FNS guidance states that whole-grain-rich food must meet both of the following:**

### Criterion #1.

A serving of the food item must meet portion-size requirements as defined in FNS guidance.

**AND**

### Criterion #2.

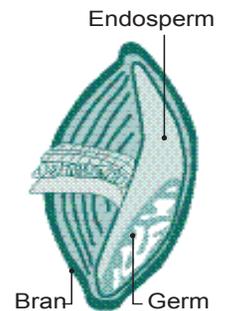
The food must meet at least one of the following:

- The whole grains per serving must be  $\geq 8$  grams.
- The product includes the following Food and Drug Administration (FDA)- approved whole-grain health claim on its packaging: “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers.”
- The product ingredient listing lists a whole grain first.

## 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, thiamin, 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.

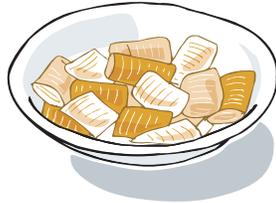
**Terms that indicate refined grains, NOT whole grains:** flour, enriched flour, wheat flour, bread flour, durum flour, grits, hominy, farina, semolina, cornmeal, degerminated cornmeal, corn flour, rice, rice flour, couscous, pearled barley, Scotch barley, pot barley.

**Some examples of whole grain-rich foods are:**

- 100% whole-wheat bread, bagels, or English muffins
- oatmeal
- 100% whole-wheat crackers
- whole-grain breakfast cereal, such as whole-wheat cereal flakes
- whole-wheat tortillas and whole-corn tortillas that do not have “lime” in the ingredients list
- brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, bulgur (cracked wheat)
- whole-wheat pasta
- whole-grain cornmeal, whole-wheat flour

## 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!



## For More Information:

**Team Nutrition** (<http://teammnutrition.usda.gov>)

**USDA Choose MyPlate** ([www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov))

**MyPlate** (<http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/myplate.html>)

**Let's Eat for the Health of It** (<http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/letseat.html>)

**The Scoop on Whole Grains** (<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/UCM152011.pdf>)

**Grains With Gusto** (<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120102044049.pdf>)

**Increasing Dietary Fiber** (<http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120102035930.pdf>)