

Feed Your Body – Feed Your Soul



Go with the grain

With one look down the grocery store aisle or a quick glance at a restaurant menu, it's clear that whole-grain options are popping up everywhere. From quinoa to buckwheat and farro to freekeh, the number of grain possibilities is growing, leaving home cooks and diners puzzled by how to choose the right one and know how to prepare it.

Not only do whole grains provide an array of health benefits, they can also be an excellent base for hearty dishes that taste great and are remarkably filling. Whether featured in a salad, formed into a patty as a vegetarian burger option, warmed up for breakfast, or used as the base of a thick stew, grains are extremely versatile and can be enjoyed as part of breakfast, lunch, dinner or dessert.

Although cooking with grains can seem like a daunting task, the chef instructors at Le Cordon Bleu encourage home cooks to soak their long-cooking grains, whether for a few hours or overnight, to minimize the cooking time. This also ensures that any resin left on the grain that can cause a bitter taste will get washed off.

They also suggest these cooking tips:

- Whole-grain options can be customized for each meal of the day. Make a big batch of steel-cut oats on Sunday evening and eat it for breakfast throughout the week. Add quinoa to lunchtime salads—add the dressing in advance so the grain fully absorbs the flavors of the dish. For dinner, add wheat berries or barley to soups for a hearty, filling meal.
- Resist the urge to stir grains as they are cooking. Stirring causes whole grains, especially rice, to become sticky and clump together, making it difficult to prepare a fluffy, flavorful dish.
- After they are cooked, whole grains stay fresh for several days in the refrigerator. You can cook a large pot of brown rice or quinoa at the beginning of the week and use it in dishes throughout the week to save cooking time.