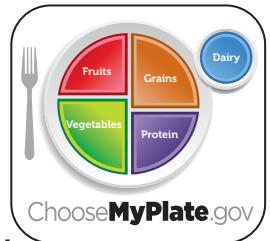


10 tips

Nutrition
Education Series

choosing whole-grain foods



10 tips for purchasing and storing whole-grain foods

Whole grains are important sources of nutrients like zinc, magnesium, B vitamins, and fiber.

There are many choices available to make half your grains whole grains. But whole-grain foods should be handled with care. Over time and if not properly stored, oils in whole grains can cause spoilage. Consider these tips to select whole-grain products and keep them fresh and safe to eat.

1 search the label

Whole grains can be an easy choice when preparing meals. Choose whole-grain breads, breakfast cereals, and other prepared foods. Look at the Nutrition Facts labels to find choices lower in sodium, saturated (solid) fat, and sugars.



2 look for the word “whole” at the beginning of the ingredients list.

Some whole-grain ingredients include whole oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain corn, whole-grain brown rice, wild rice, and whole rye. Foods that say “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “high fiber,” or are brown in color may not be a whole-grain product.

3 kids can choose whole grains

The new school meal standards make it easier for your kids to choose whole grains at school. You can help your child adapt to the changes by slowly adding whole grains into their favorite recipes, meals, and snacks at home.

4 find the fiber on label

If the product provides at least 3 grams of fiber per serving, it is a good source of fiber. If it contains 5 or more grams of fiber per serving, it is an excellent source of fiber.

5 is gluten in whole grains?

People who can't eat wheat gluten can eat whole grains if they choose carefully. There are many whole-grain products, such as buckwheat, certified gluten-free oats or oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, and quinoa that fit gluten-free diet needs.



6 check for freshness

Buy whole-grain products that are tightly packaged and well sealed. Grains should always look and smell fresh. Also, check the expiration date and storage guidelines on the package.

7 keep a lid on it

When storing whole grains from bulk bins, use containers with tight-fitting lids and keep in a cool, dry location. A sealed container is important for maintaining freshness and reducing the possibility of bug infestations or moisture.

8 buy what you need

Purchase smaller quantities of whole-grain products to reduce spoilage. Most grains in sealed packaging can be kept in the freezer.

9 wrap it up

Whole-grain bread is best stored at room temperature in its original packaging, tightly closed with a quick-lock or twist tie. The refrigerator will cause bread to lose moisture quickly and become stale. Properly wrapped bread will store well in the freezer.

10 what's the shelf life?

Since the oil in various whole-grain flours differs, the shelf life varies too. Most whole-grain flours keep well in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 months and in the freezer for 6 to 8 months. Cooked brown rice can be refrigerated 3 to 5 days and can be frozen up to 6 months.



United States
Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.

MX977

DG TipSheet No. 22

September 2012

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.