



## **Supergrains & Wholegrains:**

### ***The variety & why they're good for you***

The most popular grains the majority of Australians consume are wheat, rice and oats. However, there are variety of wholegrains available which are often less processed and therefore nutrient dense. Whole grains are necessary for proper digestion, calming the nervous system, encouraging sleep and satisfying hunger and taste, thereby decreasing cravings, while promoting energy and endurance, elimination, good reflexes, a long memory and clear thinking.

Whole grains require a different digestive procedure than refined grains do. Many grains are mildly acidic and most diseases involve an overly acidic condition in the blood, so they must be chewed well, as saliva is needed for digesting them properly, from the top to the bottom of the gastrointestinal tract. Saliva is alkaline. Those who have trouble chewing should eat their whole grains as cereals.

#### ➤ **Amaranth**

This plant is native to Mexico and is considered a super-grain due to its excellent nutritional content. The tiny pale seed or "grain" has a strong and distinctive, peppery flavour. It is best used in stews and soups or it can be ground into flour to make bread, pastries and biscuits. The flour is gluten-free and has to be mixed with wheat or another flour that contains gluten to make leavened bread.

This is great for those with increased nutritional needs, such as lactating mothers, pregnant women, children, toddlers and those who do physical work. Higher in lysine than other grains (great for cold sore sufferers), it has an intense flavour (and is quite pricey), so may be mixed with other grains. It contains 15-18 percent protein, is high in fibre, amino acids and vitamin C and has more calcium, magnesium and silicon than milk.

You can buy Amaranth as a cereal to add to cooked porridge or into muesli or smoothies from most health food stores. It also available in Coles cereal aisle.

#### ➤ **Barley**

Believed to be the oldest cultivated grain, barley is still a fundamental part of everyday diet in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Pearl barley, the most usual form is husked, steamed and then polished to give its characteristic ivory-colored appearance. It has a mild, sweet flavour and chewy texture, and can be added to soups, stews and bakes. It is also used to make old-fashioned barley water. Pot barley is the whole grain with just the inedible outer husk removed. It takes much longer to cook than pearl barley, but pot barley is more nutritious.

Pot (whole) barley has more fibre, twice the calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, B vitamins, three times the iron and 25 percent more protein than pearl barley. Barley builds the blood, benefits the gall bladder and nerves and is easy to digest. Protease inhibitors in barley have been found to suppress cancer of the intestines and eating barley regularly may also reduce the amount of harmful cholesterol produced by the liver. Roasting will make barley alkaline, aid digestion and is a great coffee substitute.

### ➤ **Buckwheat**

In spite of its name, buckwheat is not a type of wheat, but is actually related to the rhubarb family. Its available plain or toasted and has a nutty, earthy flavour. The whole grain, which is also known as kasha, makes a fine porridge or creamy pudding. Like quinoa, buckwheat is a complete protein.

It contains all 8 essential amino acids as well as rutin, a bioflavonoid that may reduce blood pressure and improve circulation to hands and feet. It is an excellent sustaining cereal rich in both iron and some of the B complex vitamins. Buckwheat also improves appetite and strengthens digestion, so good for the elderly or chronically ill. Sprouted buckwheat is a great source of enzymes, chlorophyll and vitamins. It will die when grown with most chemicals.

It can be used as a wholegrain or a flour source (e.g baking, pancakes, pizza bases). It's available from most health food stores and also in health food isles of supermarkets.

### ➤ **Corn**

Although we are most familiar with yellow corn or maize, blue, red black and even multi-colored varieties can also be found if you look hard enough.

Corn promotes healthy teeth and gums, helps kidneys and sexual problems and improves digestion. Puffed corn can be added into a muesli mix. Available from Coles health food isle.

### ➤ **Kamut**

An unadulterated older cereal variety from Ancient Egypt with grains often 3 times the size of wheat. It has a high protein content as well as being rich in amino acids and vitamins. Kamut is available as a puffed cereal in health food isles of supermarkets, great to add into a muesli mix.

### ➤ **Millet**

Although millet is mostly associated with bird food (!) it is a highly nutritious grain. It once rivalled barley as a main food of Europe and remains a staple ingredient in many parts of the world, including Africa, China and India. Its mild flavour makes it an ideal accompaniment to spicy stews and curries and it can be used as a base for pilaffs or milk puddings. The tiny firm grains can be flaked or ground into flour. This flour can be used for baking but needs to be combined with high-gluten flours to make leaved bread.

It is an easily digested grain, contains more iron than other grains and is a good source of zinc, calcium, manganese and B vitamins. Millet balances over-acid conditions, strengthens the kidneys, reduces bacteria in the mouth, is high in protein and silicon and reduces Candida overgrowth.

Roasted, it will help with diarrhoea, indigestion and diabetes and may also ease morning sickness. It is lovely for a winter breakfast. As with all grains and legumes, it is best to soak overnight. Cook with soymilk or water over a low heat. Serve with stewed fruit or yoghurt. Add honey or rice malt to sweeten if desired. Available as a grain, meal, puffed or ready made cereals. It's also gluten-free and available from Coles health food isles.

### ➤ **Oats**

Oats aid the nervous and reproductive systems, strengthen heart muscles and remove cholesterol from arteries and the gastrointestinal tract. They are helpful for indigestion, sexual dysfunction, abdominal bloating, diabetes, nervous tension and dysentery. They

help with bone density and renew connective tissue, as well as being high in silicon. They also contain phosphorus, which is required for brain and nerve formation in children. A great source of soluble fibre they keep the bowels active and encourage the excretion of cholesterol from the body.

Use them in baking or as part of porridge mix e.g. with barley flakes, quinoa, rice flakes and amaranth, or on their own for a traditional breakfast.

### ➤ **Quinoa**

Quinoa (pronounced keen-wa) is a cousin of amaranth. One of my favourites as it is considered a super-grain, it strengthens the whole body and has the highest protein content of any grain (similar profile to amaranth). It contains more calcium than milk, is a very good source of iron, phosphorus and B and E vitamins. Great for vegetarians, the elderly and toddler/children. Some think it's a strong and quite a pricey grain, so can be combined wonderfully with other grains in a porridge blend.

Cook as you would brown rice or cook with equal quantities of quinoa and rice. Be sure to wash well. Quinoa flakes are available and take less time to cook and blend well in a porridge mix. Check the internet for the varied uses and recipes using quinoa.

### ➤ **Rice**

As a soluble fibre source, rice expels toxins from the body. It is high in vitamin B, so will help with nervous tension and depression. It may be used for nausea, diabetes and diarrhoea. White rice lacks bran and the associated fibre and essential nutrients. An old Chinese proverb suggests that brown rice preserves spiritual and physical strength.

### ➤ **Rye**

Rye increases strength and endurance, cleans out arteries and is great for nail, hair and bone health. Suited more to sourdough baking, as it is a very hard grain.

### ➤ **Spelt**

An original wheat grain from Israel, spelt is having a re-emergence into western diets. It contains gluten but it is easily digested and therefore may suit those who are gluten/wheat sensitive, but not those totally intolerant. Use as you would regular wheat; breads, baking etc. As it's less processed than ordinary wheat its nutritional profile is more intact. Spelt flakes (similar to oats) are available at health food store – great in porridge on their own or in a blend.

### ➤ **Wheat**

As a grain wheat calms the mind and helps with focus. May be used in cases of insomnia, palpitations, symptoms of menopause, irritability and disorders of the nervous system. Eat in moderation if you are overweight, if at all.

It can lead to abdominal bloating, fatigue and digestive issues if 'over-done' in some people. Therefore it is best to use wheat as part of one's total wholegrain intake. As Australia is a major exporter of wheat, their products are in abundance in our supermarkets being the base of breads, pastries; cereals (eg. weet-bix), crackers, biscuits etc. Some people feel a lot better reducing or cutting wheat from their diet.

***Although some of these grains may be new to you, check the internet for recipes (e.g. google 'quinoa recipes') – you're bound to be surprised at the variety!***