

# White Rock Sun

Serving White Rock & South Surrey

## Health

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### **Bread is a highly refined food . . .**



*White or whole grain, it's all about the flour. And flour, any type, is highly refined.*

**O**ur neolithic ancestors and our early pioneers would harvest kernels of grain (also called “berries”) from the fields and cook them to eat as their “porridge.” They also crushed those grains (making flour) to use in various ways, but flour wasn’t as ubiquitous then as it is today. Especially during the era of our early pioneers, they found storage methods inadequate for stocking large amounts of flour: it couldn’t be stored for long periods because it was quickly infested by insects and rodents.

Then, someone realized if we separated the wheat germ and the bran (the nutritious parts of the grain) from the starchy endosperm, the insects and mice wouldn't infest the flour supply. These smart little buggers intuitively knew there was no nutrition in the starchy endosperm. So, our "white flour and white bread" became one of many popular processed foods developed by humans.

Later, as technology improved our storage methods and our health began to deteriorate, our nutrition police decided we should keep the nutritious wheat germ and bran in our flour. So, we stopped separating wheat germ and bran from the starchy endosperm. And *whole grain* flour became as popular as white.

However, there's no such thing as *whole grain* flour or bread. It's actually not possible, because the grain kernel has been refined into flour, therefore it isn't "whole" any longer. By crushing those nutritious hard berries or kernels of grain, we lose many of the nutrients locked inside. They are destroyed when they are crushed and exposed to the air, light, and heat (it's called oxidation). We attempt to replace those lost nutrients (called fortifying or enriching), or we take vitamin supplements. But how do we replace the nutrients we haven't yet discovered or identified? The whole grain kernel has been changed into nothing more than a highly refined, nutrient-depleted food.

When you eat whole grain breads, crackers, pasta, etc., you are consuming a highly processed/refined food. This type of food is far too prevalent today: we are a 'sandwich-dependant' culture. In addition, added to our breads and other flour-containing products are ingredients we certainly do not need more of ([salt](#), sugars, fats, and other preservatives). And 'bread' has a higher glycemic index (it's 'absorbed' much faster) than the whole grain kernel it came from. That can certainly have an affect on blood sugar levels, especially in the amounts we currently eat of flour-containing food items. Diabetes, anyone?

More often, consider eating a whole grain intact, *before* it becomes flour, so that the nutrients are released into your body (instead of into the air). Of course, you must cook them first, as our early pioneers did. But even after cooking the grain, most of the nutrients are still locked within the kernels, released into your body when you chew them.

There are many types of whole grains (some are classified as grasses): from the exotic ones like quinoa (pronounced keenwa), amaranth, and teff, to the more common varieties like brown rice, millet, wheat, rye, barley, and oats. There is also buckwheat, spelt, kamut, and many others. Cooking them is very simple: it's not rocket science and you don't need a special rice cooker. Use two parts water

to one part grain (wild rice is the exception: use three parts water), let it come to a boil on the stove, then reduce the heat and let it simmer (covered or uncovered) until all the water is absorbed. Avoid stirring it until then. Depending on the hardness of the grain type, the cooking process takes only 10 to 20 minutes. You can choose to pre-soak the grain overnight before cooking. It shortens the cooking time and makes it easier to digest.

You can eat your cooked whole grains hot or cold. Enjoy one half to one cup daily. Make large batches to store in the fridge and enjoy small amounts cold or reheated. You can flavour them with herbs and spices or mix into yogurt and/or fresh fruit. Toss them into your salads, add to soups, serve instead of potatoes at mealtime . . . there are hundreds of ways to enjoy whole grain kernels. Use your imagination!

There are those who believe humans shouldn't be eating whole grains; that it isn't suited to our digestive systems. But since there are strong arguments on both sides of this issue (and both sides are supported by credible sources), it's difficult to prove. You'll have to do your own research and practise *what you want to believe*. I believe primitive man did eat grains -- many were in the form of wild grasses, most of which have evolved into our grains of today. (Incidentally, buckwheat, amaranth and teff are classified as grasses). And today's variety of grasses and grains provide much to a nutritious diet, like fibre, silica, and other nutrients too numerous to list. These are lost or minimized when the whole grain kernel is rolled or crushed. Even though we enrich our breads with added nutrients like calcium, we still can't come close to replacing all those nutrients lost, especially the nutrients we haven't identified yet. Grains and grasses also act as valuable prebiotics, contributing to balanced 'gut health.'

Whatever belief you practise, whether you decide to eat grains or not, choose to eat *all* foods in their whole, natural and unaltered form. Mother Nature knows best. No need to doubt or question her.

Avoid being fanatical. There's no need to gather the neighbours, pile all your bread boxes outside, and light them on fire. There's nothing wrong with eating bread. We just eat too much of it and flour is in almost every packaged product. Simply choose to *eat less* bread and other flour products and eat *more* whole, cooked grains.

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