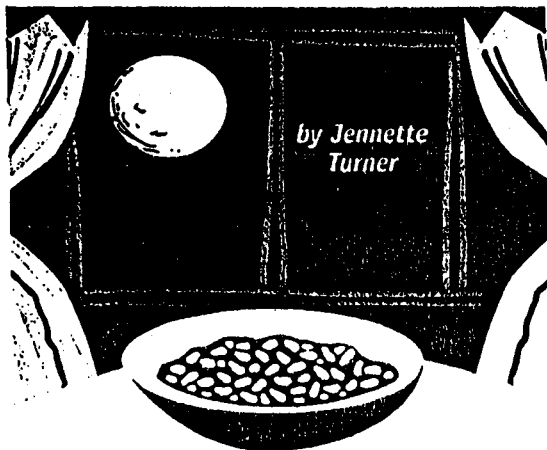


# Preparing Whole Grains the Traditional Way for Health



for this. The first is that all grains contain phytic acid in the outer layer of the bran. Phytic acid combines with calcium, phosphorous, iron, and especially zinc in the intestinal tract and blocks their absorption. This means that a diet high in whole grains which have not been soaked, fermented or sprouted can lead to bone loss and serious mineral deficiencies.

The second reason is that there are enzyme inhibitors in all grains, which are neutralized by the soaking process. Enzyme

inhibitors literally wear down the body's digestive capabilities, leading to digestive problems ranging from chronic indigestion to irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue, candida overgrowths and food allergies, among others. The people most at risk for these problems are vegetarians and vegans, who base their diets around grains and grain-products.

The third reason applies only to grains that contain gluten, which is a kind of protein. Different grains have different amounts of gluten. Oats, barley, rye, and especially wheat all contain gluten. Rice, quinoa and millet do not (they do all contain phytates, however). Gluten can be hard to digest, and many people are allergic to it. The good news is that during the process of soaking and fermenting, lactobacilli help break down the gluten, making the grains' nutrients more available to our bodies.

Different people have different digestive capacities, and there are plenty of people who can consume just about anything with no discomfort. Others are more sensitive and will feel heavy, bloated or in pain after consuming various foods. It often takes a while for the digestive tract to break down, so vegetarian, vegan or macrobiotic diets that work so well at first (and the benefits are well documented) may cause problems later on.


Many of my clients have reported great results using properly prepared grains. They have more energy and less digestive discomfort, as well as a sense of satisfaction from truly nourishing themselves.

So what if you want to make a pot of brown rice? Or you want to make quinoa pilaf, rye berry salad, or millet? What should you do? It's very simple:

1. Put the grains in the pot you're going to cook them in.
2. Rinse them off, then add water to the pot to cover the grains, plus a little.
3. Add a pinch of salt.
4. Add a spoon of something sour such as apple cider vinegar, lemon juice, umeboshi vinegar or whey. The acid in the sour ingredient helps to neutralize the phytic acid in the grains.
5. Soak the grain overnight if you're going to cook it in the morning, or all day if you're going to have it in the evening (7-24 hours).
6. Discard the soaking water. Now you're ready to cook the grains like you usually would.

The grain will have a little different texture than you may be used to. It's slightly softer and more moist. I've found that most people adjust very quickly and come to prefer the taste of soaked grains.

If you soak your grains and then change your mind and decide to go out that night or something, don't worry! Just change the water and keep soaking! You need to change this water about every 12 hours or so.

My "Preparing Whole Grains the Traditional Way for Health" class, offered April 10 at the Wedge Co-op, will be a more in-depth look at this material. It will cover cracked and rolled grains, the use of flours for baking and other needs, and common grain products like granolas, cereals, and rice cakes. We will discuss the most healthful preparation methods for legumes, including soybeans and their products, nuts and seeds. Other relevant topics will also be covered. 

Jennette Turner is a certified Holistic Nutritionist who has worked with natural foods and healing for over nine years. She maintains a private practice in St. Paul, and has published articles nationwide. Her class "Preparing Grains the Traditional Way for Health" will be held on Wednesday, April 10 from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

**M**ost co-op shoppers know that whole grains are nutritionally superior to refined ones. Refined grains, like refined sugars and oils, are stripped of their natural vitamins, minerals, proteins and fibers. This means that the body needs to use its own store of what was refined out in order to metabolize the food. For example, the breakdown of carbohydrates requires B vitamins, most of which are removed during refining. So it makes sense to eat whole grains and whole grain flours, right? Yes! But it also makes sense to prepare them in a health-promoting way.

Most people consume whole grains and flours in a manner that can have harmful effects on health.

Our ancestors and peoples all over the world soaked or fermented their grains before using them in porridges, breads, pilafs and casseroles. From "ogi" porridge in Africa made from fermented millet, to Mexican "pozol" made from fermented corn, people have taken great care with whole grains. Europeans made slow-rising breads from fermented starters, and our own American Pioneers made buttermilk pancakes and biscuits by soaking flours in sour milk—a practice largely forgotten today. Many older people may recall, though, that cooking instructions on oatmeal boxes used to include an overnight soaking.

What did our ancestors know that we have forgotten? They knew that grains treated this way were more digestible and "better for you." Modern science understands three big reasons