Let's Celebrate the Origins of Ancient Grains

There are many different whole grains with unique origins and health benefits. Make it a goal to incorporate more varieties into your daily diet!

Freekah
Origin: originated in Egypt and Middle Eastern countries
Time period: has been cultivated for more than 4,000 years
Most common preparation: Freekah can be used in place of rice and is a great grain to be added to soups.

Health Benefit: Freekah is high in protein and fiber content. It also is noted for its low glycemic index and ability to help keep blood sugars steady.

Fun fact: The word “freekeh” means “to rub” in Arabic, which is where this grain got its name.

Quinoa
Origin: originated in the Andes
Time period: has been cultivated since around 1200 AD
Most common preparation: Unlike most grains, quinoa cooks in 10-12 minutes! It is most commonly used as a replacement of cereal as well as in entrees, salads and baked goods.

Health Benefit: Abundant in protein, quinoa is considered a complete protein. It contains all the essential amino acids our bodies can't make on their own. Quinoa is also naturally gluten free!

Fun fact: Botanically, quinoa is related to beets, chard and spinach. In fact, the crop’s leaves can be eaten as well as its seeds.

Oats
Origin: originated in Asia
Time period: has been cultivated for more than 2,000 years
Most common preparation: There are various types of oats. The preparation of rolled oats and steel-cut oats require similar proportions using two parts water to one part oats. Rolled oats take approximately 15 minutes to cook while the steel-cut variety takes about 30 minutes.

Health Benefit: Oats have unique antioxidant properties that have shown to significantly reduce the risk of heart disease as well as other chronic diseases.

Fun fact: Oats contain a special kind of fiber called beta-glucan that has shown to help enhance the body’s immune system response to bacterial infection.

Barley
Origin: originated in Ethiopia and Southeast Asia
Time period: has been cultivated for more than 10,000 years
Most common preparation: Rinse and then add barley to boiling water or broth. When the liquid has returned to a boil, turn down the heat, cover and simmer.

Health Benefit: The fiber in barley can help lower cholesterol and improve digestive health.

Fun fact: Barley played an important role in ancient Greek culture as a staple bread-making grain as well as an important food for athletes, who attributed much of their strength to their barley-containing training diets.

Tips on How to Choose Whole Grains

1. Look at the label! Choose foods that use the name “whole” used to identify the first grain ingredient.
2. Foods labeled with the words “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not whole-grain products.
3. Color is not an indication of a whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients. Read the ingredient list to see if it is a whole grain.
4. Use the Nutrition Facts label and choose whole grain products with a higher % Daily Value (% DV) for sodium. Foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving can be labeled as “low sodium” foods.
5. Read the nutrition label’s ingredient list. Look for terms that indicate added sugars (such as sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, malt syrup, maple syrup, molasses, or raw sugar) that add extra calories. Choose foods with fewer added sugars.
6. Be aware—some people eat from packaged foods. Similar packaged foods can vary widely in sodium content, including breads. Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods with a lower % DV for sodium. Foods with less than 140 mg sodium per serving can be labeled as “low sodium” foods.

No-Cook Overnight Oats with Almonds and Berries

Ingredients
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chia seeds
- 1 1/2 tablespoons honey
- 1/2 teaspoon orange zest
- Juice of 1 orange
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups low-fat 2 percent milk or unsweetened almond milk
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- 1/4 cup sliced strawberries or blueberries (or any fruit)

Instructions
1. In a large, re-sealable container, add oats, chia seeds, honey, orange zest, orange juice and vanilla extract. Stir to combine. Pour in milk and mix to combine. Place in the refrigerator and let it sit overnight.
2. Top oatmeal with almonds and berries and serve. If you prefer your oatmeal hot, simply warm it in the microwave for 1 to 2 minutes, stirring halfway through, and then add the toppings. Microwaving is only optional.

Recipe by Mindful By Sodexo

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