



Main Grains - The Foundation of Your WFPB Diet

Grains are one of the most comforting, grounding, and versatile foods in a plant based, whole-food diet. They're such a staple in fact that Ground Leaf and leading experts (1) recommend that grains occupy the largest part of your proverbial plate: 5+ servings per day.

A grain itself is simply a hard, dried seed that's harvested for consumption, such as rice, wheat, and barley. A whole grain - the kind of grain you'll mostly be finding in Ground Leaf recipes - usually includes the bran, germ, and endosperm.

Grains have suffered a great deal from the advent of industrial agriculture, and the traditional methods of both harvesting and preparing them have given way to faster, cheaper practices. Prepared grain products differ greatly from whole grains themselves, so keep in mind that grains (even "whole grains") as an *ingredient* are not the same as a whole grain prepared properly, and eaten in its original form.

In a whole food, plant-based diet, high quality grains account for so much essential nutrition. So let's take a look at the main grains on your mind, as well as the many others you've likely wondered about.

Wheat...what?

There is no more vilified food in the nutritional landscape these days than good ol' wheat. What was once an agricultural breakthrough that kept people fed all year round has become a culinary villain that a third of American adults are trying to eliminate from their diets. And while Celiac disease is as legitimate a condition as any, the emergence and popularity of "gluten sensitivity" in the past decade has blown up to tune of 20 million Americans claiming to experience discomfort after eating wheat (2).

So what exactly is gluten, anyway? Derived from Latin "glue", gluten is simply a mixture of proteins found in grains like wheat, barley, rye, oat, and their offspring like spelt and kamut (3). Gluten gives bread dough its elasticity, and is solely responsible for pizza's ability to be tossed up in the air and flung around without breaking into a million blobs and splattering all over pizza parlor walls.

Ground Leaf's take on wheat is similar to many other foods (like conventional produce): it's not the food that's so bad, but what modern industrial agriculture has done to it that's creating so many problems. And while true Celiac disease is terrible to live with, statistics show that it only affects a mere one percent of the population, contrary to what mainstream media may have you believe.

The plus side to the fear that's been generated around wheat is that if you do have a gluten sensitivity, and you find that breads, crackers, doughnuts, pizza, and other

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gluten-containing foods make you feel icky, there are now thousands of alternatives lining shelves at health-oriented grocers. These days, you can find basically anything traditionally made with bread in a gluten free form.

Quinoa

Quinoa (pronounced keen-wah) is a tiny seed that's eaten like a grain, and is more delicate in texture than rice. High in complete protein, fiber, and other minerals that boost the functioning of your brain and body, this "super-seed" is super tasty, super nutritious, and...super expensive. Try to find small grocers in less-than-ritzy shopping districts for these babies, as you'll likely save up to 40%.

Rice

Rice is one of the most common grains eaten in its natural form, and is a staple across the world from South America to South East Asia. You can find rice in plenty of different varieties like brown, white, jasmine etc., and for plenty of different cultural dishes like Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Moroccan. Try different rice varieties whenever you can, as North Americans are generally not "in the know" about the vast world of rice varieties. If you're curious about Ground Leaf's take on the brown white vs. white rice debate, check this out: <http://groundleaf.co/white-or-brown-rice>

One of the most exciting parts of creating Ground Leaf recipes is having an excuse to try all the obscure and alternative grains out there. Farro, millet, rye, barley, amaranth, buckwheat, kamut, spelt, and teff have all made their way through the Ground Leaf kitchen, and the exploratory, exciting grain-based recipes that have followed will all be found right here for you to enjoy.

And if the "low carb" trends or "starches are bad" rumors have seeped their way into your mind, don't fret. John A. McDougall, a physician and nutrition expert who's been in the field for over 30 years says this:

"The human diet is based on starches. The more rice, corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and beans you eat, the trimmer and healthier you will be."

- 1) http://www.jeffnovick.com/RD/Blog/Entries/2011/11/15_Test_2.html
- 2) <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/03/grain>
- 3) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gluten>
- 4) <https://www.drmcDougall.com/>