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## WHAT IS WHEAT GERM AND WHY SHOULD I USE IT?

Most people have heard of wheat germ and know it's good for them, but don't really know why they should use it. Wheat germ is the inner most part of a great of wheat - it is responsible for the growth of a new wheat sprout. It is the part of the wheat kernel that is removed when unbleached and white flours are processed.

### Why should I use it?

Though it is a very small part of the wheat seed, it contains many nutrients, including niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin E, folate, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, iron and zinc. Wheat germ is also high in fiber, and contains approximately 1 gram of fiber per tablespoon.

### How should I use it?

Wheat germ is versatile and can be used in many types of foods. Try adding a tablespoon per serving to your soups, or sandwich fillings.

You can try adding some to the breading mixture you use on fish, chicken, vegetables, or tofu before frying or baking.

When making yeast breads try substituting  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of wheat germ and  $\frac{3}{4}$  flour for every cup of flour you would normally use. Because wheat germ tends to absorb moisture, you may want to add one to two tablespoons of water for every one-quarter cup of wheat germ you add to a recipe.

Another suggestion is when making pie crusts sprinkle  $\frac{1}{4}$  wheat germ on top of the crust and gently press in. Or when making crumb crusts substitute  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup wheat germ for an equal amount of graham cracker crumbs.



Wheat germ also makes an excellent addition to sandwich fillings such as chicken, tuna, or egg salad. You can also try this sandwich filling:

Combine 1 cup of peanut butter,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup wheat germ,  $\frac{2}{3}$  cup honey, 3 tablespoons of cocoa and 1 teaspoon of

vanilla. Its also good as a cracker spread.

You can also try incorporating wheat germ into your breakfast meal by adding to cereal, eggs, pancake mix, yogurt, or blending two tablespoons of wheat germ with 1 cup of milk, and a banana for a refreshing drink.

Whatever way you choose to use wheat germ in your diet, you know you will be healthier, you'll feel healthier and you'll have more energy.

There is one precaution to keep in mind when storing wheat germ, however. Because of its unsaturated fat content it can go rancid if not properly stored in a fridge or freezer, and away from sunlight. Fresh wheat germ should smell something like toasted nuts, not musty. Stored properly it should keep for up to nine months.

## IRONING OUT THE DETAILS

If you are experiencing sluggishness, irritability or headaches, you may want to have your doctor check your body's iron levels.

Iron is one of the most abundant metals on Earth and in humans, is an essential component of proteins involved in oxygen transport. About 70% of the iron your your body is located in your red blood cells. A deficiency of iron limits oxygen delivery to cells, resulting in fatigue, poor work performance, and decreased immunity.

Fortunately iron can be found in many foods such as chicken, beef, turkey, oysters, clams and other sea foods.

There's no need to worry if you are vegetarian because iron is plentiful in molasses, oatmeal, whole wheat, beans, spinach and other dark green vegetables. The only problem is that the iron from vegetable sources is not as easily absorbed as that from meat sources.

Pregnant women, infants, small children and vegetarians are more likely to have an iron deficiency than the rest of the general population.

It would be wise that this group of individuals carefully watch their intake and try consuming their iron sources with vitamin C rich foods such as citrus fruits.

A very simple way to add iron to your diet is to cook with cast iron pots. The iron seeps

into the food, especially acid foods like tomato sauces.

If you mix some lean meat, fish, or poultry with beans or dark leafy greens at a meal, you can improve absorption of vegetable sources of iron up to three times. Another way to help your body to absorb iron more easily is to avoid drinking coffee or tea with an iron rich meal, as they also inhibit absorption.



Calcium also interferes with iron absorption so if you are taking calcium supplements, avoid doing so near an iron rich meal.

If you are taking iron supplements the amount of iron absorbed decreases with increasing doses.

For this reason, it is recommended that most people take their prescribed daily iron supplement in two or three equally spaced doses.

It is important to consult with your doctor before any major changes in your supplemental intake. Although not very common, it is important to know that iron toxicity is a serious problem that can occur in certain individuals. Iron deficiency is uncommon among adult men and postmenopausal women. Also, there are certain people who have a genetic abnormality which makes their body store excessive amounts of iron. These individuals should only take iron supplements when prescribed by a physician because of their greater risk of iron overload. The result could be damage to the liver and other organs, and in extreme cases even death.

## BLACK BEAN BONUSES

THIS MONTH AT  
GOOD EARTH  
NATURAL FOODS

100% ORGANIC  
BLACK TURTLE  
BEANS  
95¢ PER POUND

Beans are an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, fiber, and protein. They contain healthy doses of iron, B vitamins, calcium and phosphorus.

Their classic boast is fiber - both soluble and insoluble. If one of your New Year's resolution is weight loss, beans are a great weight loss aid as they will suppress your appetite for hours because they are digested very slowly.

### BASIC BEAN BURGERS

- 1 cup TVP (textured vegetable protein)
- 1 scant cup boiling water
- 1 Tbs. Ketchup
- 2 cups black beans cooked
- ¼ cup whole wheat bread crumbs
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- 1 Tbs. tamari
- 1 tsp honey
- Whole wheat flour for dusting

Combine boiling water and ketchup. Pour over TVP and let sit for 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients, except for the flour, and process in a food processor until nearly smooth. Dust your hands with the flour and shape into six patties. Dust the patties with a little additional flour and layer between

sheets of waxed paper. Refrigerate for a least one hour. Fry in a small amount of oil until heated through, or grill on a sheet of foil about ten minutes each side.

### BLACK BEANS IN PITA POCKETS

- 3 cups cooked black beans, rinsed & drained
- 2 Tbs. chopped red pepper
- 2 Tbs. sliced green onions
- 2 Tbs. parsley
- 1 ½ Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. lemon juice
- 1 ½ Tbs. water
- ¼ tsp. dried mustard
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4 whole wheat pita breads, warmed and cut in half

Combine the first four ingredients in a large bowl. Combine the remaining ingredients, except the pita bread, in a large bowl. Stir briskly with a wire whisk to combine. Pour over bean mixture. Let stand for 30 minutes. Stuff pita breaks equally with the mixture.

### SPICY BLACK BEAN TACOS

- 2 Tbs. Olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 4 cups black beans, cooked, drained and mashed
- ½ cup water
- 10 corn tortillas
- Salsa, red onion, chopped lettuce, sour cream, if desired

Preheat the oven to 350°  
Heat the oil. Sauté garlic for one minute. Add the beans and water. Mix thoroughly, cover and simmer on low until hot.

Place the tortillas in a covered dish. Heat for several minutes until warmed. Remove and fill each shell with about ¼ cup of beans. Top with your favorite toppings.

## BRING BACK MEMORIES OF SUMMER WITH DRIED FRUITS

Dried fruits and vegetables are high in fiber and carbohydrates and low in fat. However, dried foods are more calorically dense than their fresh counterparts. The recommended serving size for dried fruits and vegetables is half that of fresh.

Dried fruits and vegetables should be kept in an airtight container. Refrigeration is not necessary, but some people prefer the taste of cold dried food. Dried fruit may be frozen, but this sometimes affects the texture and taste of the food.

Shelf life varies from product to product, but most items will keep, if stored properly, for a minimum of one month. Some items, such as raisins, have a significantly longer shelf life of approximately a year or more.

Generally, once a fruit is dried, there is no additional preparation before using. Many recipes require the fruit be sliced or diced, which is often easier when the item has been refrigerated overnight. Dried fruit are commonly used in bread, desserts, granola, or as a topping.

### Sea Bass with Dried Fruit Salsa

Makes 4 servings

- 4 (5 to 6 ounce) sea bass fillets, about 1-inch thick)
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¼ cup of each dried fruit, mango, papaya, cherry, and pineapple
- 1/3 cup apple juice or cider
- 2 Tbsp cider vinegar
- 2 Tbsp apricot jam
- 2 Tbsp chopped cilantro



Rub fish with olive oil. Combine coriander, cumin, cinnamon and cayenne pepper; mix well. Set aside ½ teaspoon of the mixture for the fruit salsa. Add salt to remaining mixture. Rub seasonings over both sides of fish. Heat a large nonstick skillet over high heat until hot. Add fish. Reduce heat to medium, cook 3–5 minutes or until fish is browned and seared. Turn fish over; cook about 5 minutes or until fish is slightly firm and flaky. Combine dried fruit, juice, vinegar and ½ teaspoon reserved seasoning mixture in a small saucepan or microwave-safe dish. Bring to a boil. Stir in jam. Let stand 5 minutes. Transfer fish to serving plates. Top with fruit salsa and sprinkle with cilantro.

### Apricot-Studded Pilaf with Mushrooms

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 cup finely chopped onion
- 3 cloves minced garlic
- 8 oz Portobello mushrooms, thickly sliced
- 1/2 cup sliced carrots
- 1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
- 1 cup long-grain brown rice
- 1/2 cup wild rice
- 2 cups carrot juice (or orange juice)
- 1/2 tsp rosemary
- 1/2 tsp dried sage
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup diced dried apricots

In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes or until onion is golden brown. Stir in mushrooms, carrot, and bell pepper; cover and cook 7 minutes until the vegetables are tender. Stir in brown rice, wild rice, carrot juice, rosemary, sage, black pepper, and 2 cups of water; bring to a boil. Stir in apricots, and cook 45 minutes, or until rice is tender and liquid has been absorbed.