



Intact Grains: What They Are and How to Cook Them

Most people think of grains as either refined or whole, but there's more to the story. Intact grains, like farro, barley, and quinoa, are the superstars, offering flavor, texture, and nutrition in their most natural form. These minimally processed grains retain their full structure, providing more fiber, protein, and essential nutrients.

What Are Intact Grains?

Intact grains are grains that are still "intact," meaning they haven't been crushed or milled into flour. They retain their bran and germ (the healthiest parts that are stripped out during processing), giving them a richer nutrient profile compared to refined grains. Studies show that refining a whole grain removes up to 80% of its nutrients, so choosing intact grains ensures you're getting the most nutrition in every bite.

Intact grains absorb water during cooking and expand, providing more food for fewer calories. This helps you feel full longer, making them great for weight management. Plus, the fiber in intact grains adds to this feeling of fullness without adding extra calories. Think of it this way - a portion of 100 calories from whole grain crackers isn't very much, and may leave you hungry soon after, while 100 calories from barley will fill your plate and keep you satisfied longer. Whether in grain bowls, soups, or salads, intact grains create satisfying, nutrient-dense meals.

Why Choose Intact Grains?

- **Gut Health:** High in insoluble fiber, they help keep your digestive system running smoothly.
- **Heart Health:** Rich in soluble fiber, particularly in oats and barley, which can help lower cholesterol.
- **Blood Sugar Control:** Slow-digesting carbs help stabilize blood sugar levels.
- **Nutrient Density:** Intact grains contain important vitamins and minerals, like magnesium, iron, and B-vitamins.

Intact Grains vs. Whole Grain Ingredients

Many packaged foods—like whole wheat bread, whole grain tortillas, whole grain chips, and whole grain cereals—are labeled as "whole grain." While they're healthier than refined grains, they still undergo some processing that reduces their nutritional value. These grains are often ground into flour, which, although it still contains the bran and germ, doesn't retain the full structure of the original grain.

Intact grains, like farro, barley, quinoa, and spelt, are minimally processed and retain their full structure, providing more fiber, vitamins, and minerals. They also have a more favorable effect on blood sugar than more processed whole grains. While whole grain products are certainly healthier than refined grains, intact grains provide the greatest health benefits.

Wheat is a great example of a grain that comes in many forms, from highly processed white flour to whole wheat flour to intact wheat berries. While you may be familiar with whole wheat products, you can actually eat intact wheat as wheat berries, which are the whole, unprocessed version of wheat. The more processed wheat becomes, like when it's turned into white flour, the more nutrients and fiber are lost, and the worse the effect on your blood sugar and overall health. So, the closer the wheat (or any grain) is to its natural state, the better it is for your health.

What to do with Intact Grains

1. Swap out dinner rolls for intact grains.
2. Use them as a base for grain bowls, soups, or salads.
3. Try them for breakfast with fruit, nuts, and milk.
4. Add them to veggie bowls for a power-packed meal.
5. Instead of serving soup with crackers, add in a scoop of intact whole grains, or enjoy them on the side.
6. 1 cup cooked intact grains + 1 cup cooked beans + 1 cup chopped veggies + 2 tbsp Italian salad dressing = lunch perfection

See the next page for how to cook intact grains!

How to Cook Intact Grains

Cooking intact grains is easy - just simmer in water on the stove! Here is a handy guide.

Grain	Ratio	Cooking Time
Farro	1 cup farro to 3 cups water	25-30 minutes
Spelt	1 cup spelt to 3 cups water	25-30 minutes
Wheat Berries	1 cup wheat berries to 3 cups water	30-40 minutes
Brown Rice	1 cup brown rice to 3 cups water	40-45 minutes
Barley	1 cup barley to 3 cups water	45-60 minutes, until chewy but tender
Quinoa	1 cup quinoa to 2 cups water	15 minutes, until all water absorbed
Millet	1 cup millet to 2 cups water	15-20 minutes
Amaranth	1 cup amaranth to 2 1/2 cups water	20 minutes, until water absorbed
Oat Groats	1 cup oat groats to 3 cups water	45-60 minutes



Moroccan-Inspired Grain Salad

This vibrant, flavorful salad combines hearty farro with colorful veggies and a touch of dried fruit for sweetness. Perfect for a light meal or side dish.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dry farro (or another intact grain like quinoa or barley)
- 1 small cucumber, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 cup shredded carrots
- 1/4 cup dried apricots, chopped
- 1/4 cup raisins or currants
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- Salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Cook the farro (or other grain) according to the package instructions.
2. In a large bowl, combine the grain with cucumber, pepper, carrots, apricots, raisins, and cilantro.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, cumin, cinnamon, salt, and pepper.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to combine. Adjust seasoning as needed.
5. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

This salad keeps well in the fridge, perfect for meal prep.