

How to go wholegrain

With rice, brown is better but that is not always so with bread.

"Colour is not an indication that the product consists of wholegrains as bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients.

"Read the ingredient list to see if it contains wholegrains," said Madam Koay Saw Lan, the head of dietetics and nutrition services at Singapore General Hospital.

Also, choose products that list wholegrain ingredients first. Examples of such ingredients include wholewheat, brown rice, whole rye, oatmeal, whole oats, bulgur and wholegrain corn.

Switching to a wholegrain diet can be daunting and dietitians Mind Your Body spoke to advised using slow and steady steps.

Madam Koay said: "A high fibre eating plan is important to health but fibre can have side effects like intestinal bloating and gas.

"When you eat more dietary fibre, you should also increase your fluid intake. Chew more slowly to break down the fibre

compounds to make digestion easier."

While wholegrains may be slightly more expensive than refined products like white rice or flour and often take longer to cook, their health benefits far outstrip such practical inconveniences.

To cook wholegrains like brown rice, it is advisable to soak them in water for at least an hour before cooking. The water in which the rice was soaked can be used for cooking to minimise nutrient loss.

Mrs Ashu Datt, a dietitian at Sodexo Singapore, said: "Just add more water when cooking brown rice for it to become softer."

She added: "It's a myth that wholegrains require high heat to be cooked. You can cook them in the usual manner but it may take a longer time. Brown rice and wholemeal pasta are cooked in exactly the same way as refined grains."

Ms Jaclyn Reutens, a dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants, suggested adding herbs and spices when cooking wholegrains.

She said: "The grains absorb more water which means they absorb more flavour

from the fluid they are cooked in."

She also suggested cooking wholemeal pasta in a tomato-based sauce with vegetables like capsicum and mushroom, the natural flavours of which will complement the nutty taste of wholemeal spaghetti.

Instead of using breadcrumbs to batter fish or chicken, boost the dish's fibre content by using cooking oats or crushed wholegrain cereal.

Another easy way to increase consumption of wholegrains is to substitute half the portion of plain flour when baking with wholemeal flour.

Even wholegrain cereal, which is unpopular due to its dry, cardboard texture and taste, can be enlivened with a little creativity in the kitchen.

Mrs Datt said: "If you add three or four teaspoons of sugar to your wholegrain cereal, it defeats the purpose of eating healthily. Sugar should be your last resort.

"You can add honey, fresh fruit or dried fruit like raisins instead to enhance the taste of your cereal."

June Cheong

RECIPE FOR THE WHOLEGRAIN ROOKIE

MULTI-WHOLE-GRAIN RICE BALLS

by Barbara Chin, chef owner of vegetarian cafe Livinggreens at 325 Beach Road

Rice balls

1 cup of multi-wholegrains
1 cup of water

Five colour vegetable gravy

20g carrot
10g celery
10g mushroom
20g red and green capsicum
20g coriander
5g ginger
A pinch of sea salt
1 tsp of grape seed oil
1 inch of kombu or Japanese seaweed
150ml water
1 tsp of arrowroot powder
A pinch of black pepper

Method

Soak the rice for about five hours. Before cooking it, wash it two or three times. Add a cup of water to cook.

When the rice is done, shape them into balls and place them on a plate.

Put the oil in a pan and fry all the ingredients except the

arrowroot powder and water. Lower the fire and cook for about five to 10 minutes until the vegetables are fully done.

Add the seasoning and the

arrowroot powder mixed with water to make the gravy.

Pour the gravy onto the rice balls and decorate with some coriander.



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