



WHOLE GRAINS: WHEAT

Cafeteria Connection

Tell Me about Wheat

Grains are the seeds from edible grasses. When all parts of the grain seed are kept intact, it's called a whole grain. Refined grains are just the endosperm, with the bran and germ removed. Washington state ranks fourth in the nation in wheat production, with 2.24 million acres of wheat harvested in Eastern Washington in 2024—that's the equivalent of over 2 million football fields of wheat. Washington grows four classes of wheat, each with slightly different nutrient makeup and characteristics: soft white, club (a subtype of soft white), hard red spring, and hard red winter.

Crediting Information

- Wheat credits toward the Grains meal pattern component and is measured in ounce equivalents (oz eq).
- Grains offered in Child Nutrition Programs must be creditable. Creditable grains represent all of the grain ingredients in a product that are creditable toward the grains component; they include whole-grain flour, whole-grain meal, corn masa, masa harina, hominy, enriched flour, enriched meal, bran, germ, or are included in an enriched product, such as enriched bread or in a fortified cereal.
- Check with your program specialist about crediting grains for your program. Grain oz eq can be validated using one of the following resources:
 - Exhibit A: Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs,
 - The Food Buying Guide or,
 - Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement

Nutrition Facts

Wheat that still has the entire grain kernel intact is called "whole wheat." Whole wheat is rich in fiber, which is important for maintaining a healthy heart and digestive system, and regulating blood sugar. It also includes B vitamins, which help cells grow and stay healthy, and a variety of minerals and antioxidants.

When wheat is processed to make white flour, the fibrous bran layer and nutrient-rich germ are removed, leaving just the endosperm, which is made up of carbohydrates. Most of the grain's nutrients are lost in this process. Since flour is a staple food in many United States households, white flour is enriched with essential nutrients including iron, vitamins B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), and B9 (folic acid), to help ensure people are receiving essential nutrients. However, enrichment doesn't replace all nutrients affected by processing, including protein, essential fatty acids, various minerals, vitamin E, and antioxidants. It is still recommended that at least half of all grain products consumed each day are whole grains, which are naturally nutrient-dense.

Gluten is found in the endosperm of wheat and contributes to the stretchy texture and fluffy quality of bread by capturing gasses released by yeast or other leavening agents. While some individuals may have Celiac Disease, a wheat allergy, or gluten sensitivity, most people are able to eat gluten without issue.





Selection and Storage

- Wheat can be purchased in different forms, from wheat berries to refined, or whole wheat flour.
- Store wheat in moisture-proof, food-grade packaging.
- The optimal temperature for storage is 40-60 degrees F.
- When properly stored, whole wheat flour can last for several months. White flour has a longer shelf-life of up to 1 year, while whole wheat berries can last five years or longer.

Culinary Tips

- Wheat is the base ingredient in most breads, pastas, baked goods, and many cereals. For greatest nutritional value, opt for whole wheat whenever possible.
- Shredded and creamed wheat can be used to make hot breakfast cereal. Cream of wheat is typically made with refined course wheat flour but can be made from whole wheat as well.
- Wheat berries can also be cooked and eaten whole. Wheat berries make great alternatives to brown rice and a tasty additions to soups and stews.
- Tabbouleh or wheat berry salad can be a great addition to a salad bar or a fun side dish.

Recipes

- [Sweet Potato Bread Squares USDA Recipe for Schools – Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [Apple Cinnamon Crumb Muffin Iowa Recipe for Schools](#)
- [Whole Wheat Pancakes USDA Recipe for Child Care Centers](#)
- [Baking Powder Biscuits USDA Recipe for Child Care Centers](#)
- [Tabbouleh USDA Recipe for Adults in CACFP](#)
- [Whole Grain Vegetable Wrap USDA Recipe for Adults in CACFP](#)

Sourcing

- [Find wheat](#)



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