

Agriculture Adventure for Families

When you start packing that brown bag to bring to school, we’re guessing it contains some local farm grain products including breads, tortillas, chips and crackers. Cook County farmers and farmers across our state produce grains that are used locally and well beyond our state borders. When it comes to foods, consumers are increasingly looking to add whole grain to their diet, however, whole grains make up less than half of all grains on supermarket shelves. This month we highlight some grains that begin on the farm and make their way to you in a wide variety of forms. As you make purchases at the grocery store, read the ingredient label to see what type of grains are in your products. Looks can be deceiving so reading the label will let you know exactly what you are eating.



All grains start life as whole grains.

In their natural state growing in the fields, whole grains are the entire seed of a plant. This seed (also called a “kernel”) is made up of three edible parts – the bran, the germ, and the endosperm – protected by an inedible husk that protects the kernel from assaults by sunlight, pests, water, and disease.

Consumers are increasingly aware that fruits and vegetables contain disease-fighting phytochemicals and antioxidants, but they do not realize whole grains are often an even better source of these key nutrients.

Moreover, whole grains have some valuable antioxidants not found in fruits and vegetables, as well as B vitamins, vitamin E, magnesium, iron and fiber.

Eating grains, especially whole grains, provides health benefits. People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet have a reduced risk of some chronic diseases. Grains provide many nutrients that are vital for the health and maintenance of our bodies.

Source: www.wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101



You may already be eating whole grains. When you munch popcorn in the theater, or give Toasty-O’s to your toddler, or enjoy a bowl of hot oatmeal, you’re probably focusing more on the delicious taste than on the fact that these foods are whole grains.



Oats

Oats have a sweet flavor that makes them a favorite for breakfast cereals. Unique among grains, oats almost never have their bran and germ removed in processing. So, if you see oats or oat flour on the label, you’re virtually guaranteed to be getting whole grain.

In the U.S., most oats are steamed and flattened to produce “old-fashioned” or regular oats, quick oats, and instant oats. The more oats are flattened and steamed, the quicker they cook – and the softer they become. If you prefer a chewier, nuttier texture, consider steel-cut oats, also sometimes called Irish or Scottish oats. Steel-cut oats consist of the entire oat kernel (similar in look to a grain of rice), sliced once or twice into smaller pieces to help water penetrate and cook the grain. Cooked for about 20 minutes, steel-cut oats create a breakfast porridge that delights many people who didn’t realize they love oatmeal!

Source: www.wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains



Wheat

The variety of wheat grown in Illinois is soft red winter wheat. Although soft red winter wheat does not have the protein and gluten levels required for yeast breads, it is used in other food products such as flat breads, cereals, cakes, cookies, pretzels, pastries, pancakes, and biscuits, just to name a few. It is also used in non-food items such as glue, pastes, cosmetics, vitamin E extracts, pharmaceuticals, pet food, livestock feed, and straw. Southern Illinois offers a longer growing season and allows wheat to be harvested in time to plant soybeans as a “double-crop.”

Wheat is seeded, and after initial fall growth, is dormant throughout winter. Growth resumes in late winter. About that time, growers apply fertilizers to maximize production. Wheat begins to head about the first week in May. Harvest begins in the middle of June in the south and ends in July in the north. In 2015, Illinois was ranked 12th in the United States for Winter Wheat production. Illinois’ total production in bushels was 33,800,000.



Source: www.agintheclassroom.org



Popcorn



Popcorn is another type of corn that we eat. Illinois ranks 3rd in the nation for popcorn production. Popcorn is also the official Illinois snack food.

There is a little bit of water in every kernel of popcorn. When the kernel is heated, the water heats and builds up pressure. The pressure makes the water take up all the available space. When enough pressure builds up, the kernel pops and turns inside out.



Source: www.agintheclassroom.org

Corny Facts

- Popcorn is made up of both yellow and white kernels but only about 1 in 10 kernels are white.
- A single kernel pops with such force that it can be propelled up to 3 feet in the air.
- The peak period for popcorn sales for home consumption is in the fall.
- Most popcorn comes in two basic shapes when it's popped: snowflake and mushroom. Snowflake is used in movie theaters and ballparks because it looks and pops bigger. Mushroom is used for candy confections because it doesn't crumble.



Source: www.popcorn.org/Facts-Fun/Corny-Facts

August Word Search

E K D H E E V P P A O S I A F
W N J E X B O E G F T J L M N
Y Y D Y E P W R K N W P L M C
M U Y O C S Z J A Y I K I S Q
U D J O S P L D Y X Q S N R G
D N R L Z P I L D O B U O V T
J N I Z U X E T E R S H I P A
I U J A O O S R A N C J S W Y
W R Q I X E B N M R R N I B J
E Y T T S E V R A H S E D L O
Z N W H E A T T M C P J K E A
A M R E G B S I A H K Q P H T
G R Q M A M K N K C J I F S S
W H O L E G R A I N S L M U A
I V K C N Z Y Y E Y P J Z B P

Antioxidants

Bran

Bushel

Endosperm

Germ

Harvest

Husk

Illinois

Kernel

Oats

Popcorn

Seed

Snack

Starch

Wheat

Whole Grains

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