



**For the week of
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By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Jaime Ackerman Foster, registered dietitian and Ohio State University Extension program specialist in the Department of Human Nutrition, College of Human Ecology.

To receive Chow Line electronically, send an e-mail to filipic.3@osu.edu.

**Section of
Communications
and Technology
News & Media Relations**

2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services Building
Wooster, Ohio 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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Wheat berries tasty, nutritious

I recently went to a function where they served a wheat berry salad. I thought it would have berries in it, but then I realized “wheat berry” is one thing, not two. What are wheat berries?

A wheat berry is actually the unprocessed wheat seed, also known as the kernel. Wheat berries contain the whole grain – endosperm, bran and germ – and that’s what makes them so healthful. They contain all of the fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients that are removed during the refinement process used to make standard white flour.

The endosperm is the largest part of the wheat berry – more than 80 percent of it by weight. That’s what’s used to make white flour. It contains protein, carbohydrates, iron as well as many B-complex vitamins, such as riboflavin, niacin, and thiamine.

The bran makes up nearly 15 percent of the wheat berry. It’s included in whole-wheat flour, but not regular flour. Its main claim to fame is its high fiber content.

The germ, the smallest part of the wheat berry, contains only a small amount of protein but does have B vitamins and trace minerals, as well as some fat. It’s also included in whole-wheat flour.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans call for half of the grains consumers eat each day to be whole grains, but only a tiny percentage of Americans meet that recommendation. In fact, most people get most of their whole grains from just two sources: ready-to-eat breakfast cereals and snack crackers. Substituting wheat berries for white rice or pasta could help you work toward the whole-grain goal.

You can find wheat berries in health-food stores and, in some cases, at your regular grocery store. Some guidelines for cooking wheat berries call for soaking them overnight or using a pressure cooker, but often you can just cook them for an hour or two to get the same result. The more they’re cooked, the softer they get, so keep an eye on them if you’re after a nutty, crunchy texture.

Recipes using wheat berries abound on the Internet, where you might find the wheat berry salad you recently enjoyed, as well as other salads and ideas for using wheat berries in soups, muffins, rice dishes, casseroles and stews.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.