

Grains

Stages of processing

From whole grain to most finely milled:

whole grains = berries = groats – unprocessed whole grains separated from the hull; e.g. wheat berries, oat groats

pearled grains = polished grains – slightly processed grains that have had the outer bran removed; e.g. pearled barley

grits = cracked grains = steel-cut grains – whole grains cut into smaller pieces so they cook faster; e.g. corn grits, cracked wheat, steel-cut oats

flakes = rolled grains - whole grains that have been steamed and rolled into flakes; e.g. rolled oats, wheat flakes, barley flakes

meal - whole grains ground to a slightly gritty consistency; e.g. cornmeal

bran - the outer husk of the grain that is high in fiber, e.g. wheat bran, oat bran

germ - the nutritious interior of the grain that is rich in vitamins and healthy oils; refrigerate to preserve freshness; e.g. regular and toasted wheat germ

flour - whole or refined grain that has been ground to the consistency of powder; in general, darker flour indicates whole grain

Grains for soaking and grinding

These whole grains should be soaked overnight in enough water to cover them in order to reduce cooking time the next day. Or, with the exception of oat groats, you can soak and then sprout them in a jar on the windowsill. People who have grain grinders at home may also grind these grains into flour.

oat groats - mild-tasting, often soaked and then cooked for hot cereal

hard wheat berries - best for grinding into flour for bread dough

soft wheat berries - best for grain salads and side dishes

rye berries - typically ground into flour for dense, moist bread

spelt berries, farro, kamut - ancient relatives of wheat said to be more nutritious and digestible (still contain gluten!); use as you would wheat berries for salads and side dishes

Cooking whole grains

Rinse and measure whole grains, cold water, and salt and place together in a heavy-bottomed pot. Bring to a boil and stir, then cover tightly and reduce heat to its lowest setting (so it simmers). Start the cooking time from the moment the water boils. Resist the urge to lift the cover! Let the steam do its work and only stir when the grains are done (whole grains are slightly chewy when cooked).

| 1 cup grain (serves 2) | Quantity of water + ½ tsp. salt | Cooking time |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Oat groats | 3-4 cups | 30-40 min. |
| Wheat berries | 4-5 cups | 50-60 min. |
| Rye berries | 4-5 cups | 50-60 min. |
| Spelt berries | 4-5 cups | 45-60 min. |
| Kamut | 4-5 cups | 45-60 min. |
| Farro* | 4-5 cups | 30-45 min. |

*generally quick-cooking; try cooking without soaking overnight, too.