Flour

About wheat flour
Wheat flours are milled from soft or hard wheat berries and vary in gluten content. Gluten is a type of protein that helps make bread rise. In general, soft wheat berries are lower in gluten and used for muffins and other quick-breads, while hard wheat berries are higher in gluten and used for bread and pizza dough.

Whole or refined?
Whole wheat flour contains the outer bran and nutritious inner germ (which appear as brown speckles); in white flour, these have been removed and the flour has been fortified with vitamins and minerals.

Common types of wheat flour
All-Purpose Flour - refined white flour used for either for bread or quick-breads, cookies, etc.
Artisan Flour - refined white bread flour blended with a little white wheat flour and ascorbic acid; said to approximate European bread flour
Sifted Flour - whole wheat flour that has been sifted to remove a small portion of the bran (usually around 5%). Sifted flour has traditionally been called ‘bolted’ flour.
Whole Wheat Pastry Flour - whole wheat flour milled from soft wheat berries; soft and tender for quick-breads, cookies, pie, etc.
Whole Wheat Bread Flour - whole wheat flour milled from hard wheat berries; high in gluten and used for crusty bread and pizza dough
White Wheat Flour - milled from hard whitewheat berries; lighter in flavor than traditional red wheat but still 100% whole grain; can be used for either breads that need to rise or quick-breads

A note on spelt flour
Spelt is an ancestor of today’s common wheat that has a wider spectrum of nutrients than wheat and is more versatile. It can be used for either breads or quick-breads and has a slightly hearty, nutty flavor. It is higher in protein than wheat, and some people find it more digestible.

Other bread flours
Rye - produces bread with a rich, slightly sour flavor common in Germany; also quite moist and dense because it does not rise
Six-Grain - a mixture of wheat, barley, rye, buckwheat, corn, and millet flours that adds interesting flavors when mixed with bread flour
Cornmeal - great for cornbread and corn muffins; this is more finely ground flour than polenta (the Italian name) or grits (the Southern name), which are not typically used for baking.

Storage
Store whole grain flour in the freezer for up to 6 months in a tightly closed paper or plastic bag or storage container to keep the naturally occurring oils in the germ from going rancid and to keep away moisture and insects.