

# Great grains

*Tired of boring old wheat and rice?*

By Judy Schultz  
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

**I**t's a Wonder Bread world out there, folks, and we do love our carbs soft and squishy. White bread, pasta, mashed potatoes.

Trouble is, all this soft, pillowy carbohydrate means we're shorting out on fibre, not to mention flavour and texture.

The freshly minted version of Canada's Food Guide was released only days ago. We asked registered dietitian Grace Hubert about the new wisdom on grains.

"At least half our daily intake of grain products should be whole grain," says Hubert.

"For adults, 19- to 50-years-old, that means six to seven servings for women and eight for men, when one slice of bread equals a serving."

And the benefits are?

"Whole grains provide antioxidants, fibre and increased B-vitamins, plus a lower glycemic index which gives you a slower fuel burn and more normal blood glucose," says Hubert. "They also promote satiety, so we feel full longer."

That's a critical factor, considering that many of us overeat, and more than one-third of Canadians are obese or overweight.

"Whole grains, and grains in general, have been somewhat maligned with the whole low-carb craze," she says. "Yet they're inexpensive, they're a vital part of our diet, and for athletes, they're a great fuel food."

Hubert wants us to enjoy eating whole grains, whether they're in soups, salads, casseroles or breads.

"Watch those outrageous muffins that are really cakes, but don't be afraid to add a teaspoon of butter or margarine to a slice of whole grain bread," she says.

"Do not fear fats. The essential fatty acids added to a slice of whole grain bread are good for you, and that small amount of butter will help promote mental health."

## FIVE TO LOOK FOR

- ♦ Amaranth: It's an ancient grain

from Aztec times, tiny, gold with black specks; protein, vitamins, crunchy texture, peppery flavour.

- **Kamut:** Ancient variety of high-protein wheat, long, ovoid, brown kernels. Interchangeable in recipes with spelt or wheat berries.

- **Millet:** Small yellow grains, sweet flavour, highly nutritious.

- **Quinoa:** Ancient Incan plant, not a true grain; small ivory-coloured "grains" are the fruit of a goosefoot herb. Excellent source of protein, iron, calcium. Natural bitter coating of saponin must be rinsed off before cooking.

- **Spelt:** Large brown grain, an ancient form of low-gluten wheat. Pleasant nutty flavour.

## HOW TO COOK THEM

Some whole grains such as wheat berries and triticale need a long pre-soak, plus at least 20 minutes of cooking time after that.

These basics will get you to the pre-edible or edible stage, at which point they're ready to add to dough, soup, stew, salad or a casserole, where they'll proceed to absorb flavours while giving you a firm, chewy, even slightly crunchy texture, a nutritional boost, and oceans of flavour.

## WHEAT BERRIES

**Makes 2 cups (500 mL)**

*1 cup (250 mL) wheat berries*

*3 1/2 cups (875 mL) cold water*

Put wheat and water in a saucepan. Cover and soak overnight. Bring to a boil in their soaking water and cook 15 minutes for any recipe that calls for parboiled wheat berries, or 55 minutes for fully cooked wheat berries, adding more water if necessary. Drain and cool. Store in fridge. Parboiled will keep 3 days, fully cooked for five to seven. Do not freeze. Wheat berries make a terrific salad — use any tabbouleh recipe.

## BASIC BARLEY

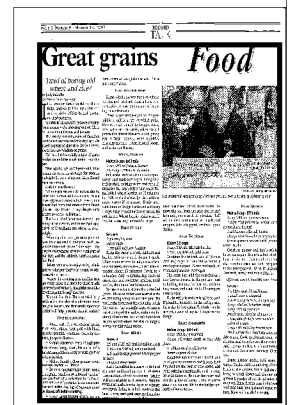
**Serves 4**

*2 quarts (2 L) water*

*salt to taste*

*1 cup (250 mL) pearl barley*

Bring the water to a boil. Add salt and



barley. Stir once so it doesn't stick. When water returns to boil, reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until almost tender, about 15 minutes. Drain in a colander. Add to simmering soup or casseroles and continue cooking until tender, about another 10 minutes.

To use in salads, steam the parboiled grains. Place colander over several inches of boiling water in another pot. (Do not let the bottom of the colander touch the water.) Lay a single layer of paper towel on top of the barley, and steam for about 30 minutes. Add to salad mixture as you would wheat berries or bulgur, using any tabbouleh recipe.

**BASIC MILLET**

**Serves 4**

*1/2 cup (125 mL) hulled millet seeds  
1 1/4 cups (300 mL) water or broth  
salt and freshly ground black pepper  
to taste  
chopped fresh herbs*

Place the millet in a heavy skillet and stir over medium heat until the seeds turn golden, about 5 minutes. (Millet will pop slightly as it browns.) Remove from heat and stir into liquid in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and cook over medium-low until millet is tender and all liquid has

been absorbed, about 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and let millet stand, uncovered, 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork, and season with salt and pepper. Add chopped herbs of your choice.

**BASIC TRITICALE**

**Makes 2.5 cups**

*1 cup (250 mL) triticale berries  
3 1/4 cups (800 mL) cold water*

Combine the triticale and 2 1/4 cups (550 mL) cups of the cold water in a medium saucepan. Cover and soak, at room temperature, overnight.

The next day, add the remaining 1 cup (250 mL) water to the pot and heat to boiling. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and cook 40 to 50 minutes, until tender.

Drain triticale and set it aside to cool. If possible, let it rest in the refrigerator for a day before using. Triticale can be stored, covered, up to 3 days in the fridge.

**BASIC AMARANTH**

**Makes 2 cups (500 mL)**

*1 cup (250 mL) amaranth  
4 cups (1 L) water, broth, or vegetable juice*

*1 tablespoon (15 mL) butter  
herbs of your choice*

Combine amaranth and liquid in a medium-size saucepan and heat to boiling. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove the cover and stir for a few minutes if the mixture seems too watery. Stir in the butter and herbs of your choice.

**BASIC QUINOA**

**Makes 3 cups (750 mL)**

*1 cup (250 mL) quinoa grains*

*2 cups (500 mL) stock, water, or vegetable juice, heated*

*2 tablespoons (25 mL) butter  
chopped herbs — chives or parsley*

Rinse quinoa under cold running water. Drain.

Combine quinoa and hot broth in a heavy saucepan. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook until the liquid is absorbed and the quinoa looks transparent, 12 to 15 minutes. Toss with butter and minced herbs.

**QUINOA WITH CARROTS AND PEAS**

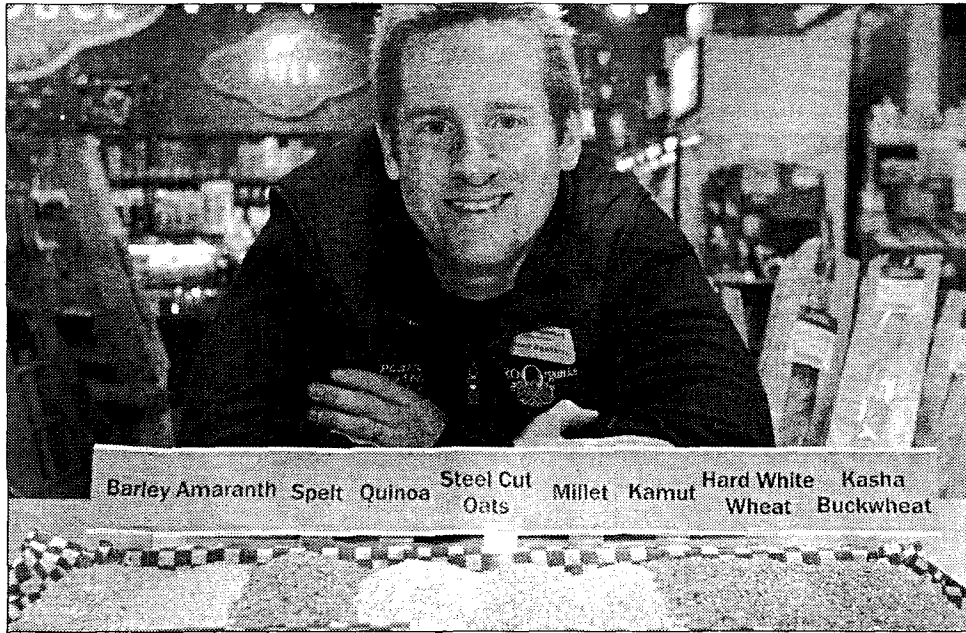
**Serves 4**

*2 tablespoons (30 mL) butter  
1 small onion, chopped  
3 or 4 young carrots, finely diced  
2 cups (500 mL) chicken broth  
1 cup (250 mL) quinoa  
pinch each, allspice, cinnamon  
1 teaspoon (5 mL) curry powder  
salt and pepper  
1 cup (250 mL) tiny frozen peas*

Melt butter in a medium saucepan. Add onion. Cook until transparent. Add carrots and toss for another minute. Add 1/2 cup chicken broth and bring to a simmer. Cover and simmer 10 minutes.

Rinse quinoa under cold running water. Drain. Add remaining chicken broth to the carrots. Stir in quinoa and bring to a boil. Cover and simmer until quinoa is tender, about 15 minutes. Stir in spices. Rinse frozen peas in hot water and fold into hot quinoa/carrot mixture. Serve with grilled chicken.

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Date <b>09.03.2007</b>	Circ. <b>5800</b> Page <b>T2</b>	<b>3 / 3</b>



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**Planet Organic** manager Doug Fleshman presides over a display of different grains.