

# Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



December 2008

## What's a Whole Grain Pasta?

Interest in eating whole grains is increasing among consumers. There is now a wide variety of whole grain pasta shapes (both flat and tubular) and many brands from which to choose, while several years ago they were virtually impossible to find in grocery stores.

Whole grains include all three portions of a grain kernel: bran, endosperm and germ. For details about whole grains, see the *Healthy Whole Grains!* consumer fact sheet at [www.oznet.ksu.edu/humannutrition/mf2560.pdf](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/humannutrition/mf2560.pdf) The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend “making half your grains whole” or eating three or more servings of whole grain foods daily.

Whole grains are healthful. Because whole wheat pastas contain whole grain, they have more vitamins, minerals, protein (7 to 10 grams per 2 ounce dry serving) and phytonutrients than refined grain pastas have. They are an excellent source of fiber, with two or three times the fiber (5 to 7 grams per 2 ounces) compared to refined-wheat

pasta (with about 2 grams per 2 ounces). Some brands of whole-wheat pasta, and all white pasta, are made with flour enriched with certain vitamins and minerals.

Manufacturers often blend whole durum with refined semolina flours to make pasta. In order to state that they are whole grain, pastas must contain at least 51% whole wheat or another whole grain flour. If they contain less than 51% whole grain flour, the package may read “made *with* whole grain.” While some whole grain pastas are made with 51% whole grain flour, the minimum amount, other pasta brands contain 100% of their grain ingredients as whole grains. Pastas made with a blend of whole and refined grains may be less coarse and heavy, and have a less gummy texture than 100% whole grain pastas. These blended whole wheat/refined wheat pastas offer superior nutrition compared with refined-semolina-only pasta, plus have a smooth texture and an appealing flavor.

Some companies describe their whole-wheat pasta as made from “whole durum wheat” while others list “whole semolina.” Both terms describe coarsely ground whole durum wheat. Whether refined white durum wheat or whole durum wheat, durum wheat is the preferred wheat for use in pasta and is high in protein, especially gluten.

Multi-grain pasta may or may not be whole-grain. Some multigrain pasta brands contain whole durum wheat flour blended with other whole grains such as oat barley and spelt. Pastas made from whole grain kamut, farro, brown rice, quinoa, corn and soba/buckwheat are also sold. Some pastas have non-grain ingredients, too, such as soy or other legumes.

While all brands of whole wheat or whole wheat/multi-grain pastas offer better nutrition than refined pastas, not all of them taste good. Some are excellent, however. Price is not an indicator of taste. Do your own price and taste test comparisons to find the right brand for you and your family.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.  
The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.  
To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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*What's a Whole Grain Pasta?*; December 2008.

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