

OATS



The popularity of oats soared in the late 1980's when highly publicized research suggested that oats could lower cholesterol, and oats displayed the health claim "*soluble fiber from oats as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol may*

reduce the risk of heart disease." The primary component identified behind the cholesterol-lowering effect is beta glucan, a form of soluble fiber. Oat bran is a particularly rich source of soluble fiber.

Recent research has identified antioxidant compounds in oats that hinder the ability of blood cells to stick to artery walls, potentially reducing the risk of heart disease. Further studies showed that these compounds, called "avenanthramides" might offer other health benefits by decreasing inflammation. In laboratory studies, avenanthramides reduced growth of colon cancer cells. Chronic inflammation is a process that can lead to heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, so consuming an "anti-inflammatory" diet containing foods like oats is considered a positive step towards preventing these diseases.

Oats are a convenient, inexpensive, and versatile whole grain that you can use for breakfast, lunch, snacks, and suppers. Continue reading to learn more about oats and discover great ways to incorporate this whole grain into your meals.

Oat Cuisine

Wake Up to Oats

Once considered lowly fare, top chefs are now serving jazzed up oatmeal in their restaurants. Consider some of these tips:

- Cook oats in fruit juice or milk.
- Spice it up with cinnamon, all-spice, nutmeg, or ginger.
- Stir in apples, peaches, or pears.
- Terrific toppings include sliced bananas, dried apricots, cranberries, raisins, and toasted nuts.

Beyond Breakfast

- Thicken soups, stews, and sauces with rolled oats.
- Substitute oats for one-third of the flour when making biscuits, scones, or cookies. Oats add texture and a mild nutty taste.
- Create wonderful desserts by baking fruit topped with a mixture of oats, brown sugar, flour, and a little margarine.



Know Your Oats

Most supermarkets carry several forms of oats. Surprisingly, most forms have similar nutritional profiles since the processing simply involves rolling or cutting oat groats (oat grains containing the bran and the germ, but not their hulls). One exception is OAT BRAN, the outer layer of oat groats, which is higher in dietary fiber. The degree of processing will, however, affect the texture and cooking time. Processing does increase the glycemic load of quick and instant oats, compared to that of rolled or steel-cut oats.

STEEL CUT OATS (also called Scotch or Irish) are sliced oat groats with a distinctly nutty flavor and marvelous texture. They take about 25 minutes to cook.

ROLLED OATS are a faster option. These oats are steamed and flattened between steel rollers. Rolled oats produce a creamier oatmeal.

Regular (old fashioned) oats have a firm texture and take about 5 minutes to cook.

Quick oats are cut into smaller pieces before being rolled. They make a smoother oatmeal that cooks in about 1 minute.

Instant oats are precooked and pressed thin, and boiling water is sufficient to produce a smooth cereal. Most instant oats contain added sodium and large amounts of sugar, so it is best to avoid these.

CHOCOLATE CHIP OATMEAL COOKIES WITH ORANGE-SCENTED CRANBERRIES

Juice and zest of 2 medium oranges (½ cup juice and 1 tbsp. rind)
 1 cup dried cranberries
 ½ cup granulated sugar
 ½ cup packed brown sugar
 ¼ cup butter, softened, or trans-free margarine
 2 tbsp. honey, corn syrup, or agave syrup
 1 large egg
 1 cup all-purpose flour
 ½ cup whole wheat pastry flour or regular whole wheat flour
 1 tsp. baking soda
 ½ tsp. baking powder
 ½ tsp. salt
 3 cups rolled oats (not instant)
 ½ cup coarsely chopped walnuts
 1 cup semisweet or bittersweet chocolate chips

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Line 2 baking sheets with aluminum foil, or coat with oil or cooking spray.
2. In a small bowl, combine cranberries, orange juice, and orange zest; cover and let stand while you prepare the rest of the ingredients.
3. In a large bowl, beat the sugars and butter at medium speed of a mixer until light and fluffy. Add honey and egg; beat well. Stir in cranberry mixture.
4. In another bowl or large measuring cup, combine the flours, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Stir in the oats, walnuts, and chocolate chips. Add this dry mixture to the sugar mixture; stir until well-blended.
5. Drop tablespoons of dough, 2 inches apart, onto baking sheets. Bake for 8 minutes or until almost set. Transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool.

MAKES FOUR DOZEN COOKIES (SERVING SIZE: 1 COOKIE)

PER SERVING: 85 calories, 2 g protein, 15 g carbohydrate, 2.5 g fat (1 g sat), 7 mg cholesterol, 1 g fiber, 66 mg sodium, 50 mg potassium, and 11 mg calcium, & 13 mg magnesium.

Count each portion as 1/4 Grains Servings and 1 Fats/Oils Servings

Adapted from *Cooking Light Magazine*

TRADITIONAL SWISS OAT MUESLI

Here's a simple and nutritious way to serve oats. This is a variation of the traditional Swiss breakfast food developed around 1900 by Swiss physician Maximilian Bircher-Benner for patients in his hospital (the Bircher-Benner Clinic). It's also wonderful with the addition of unsweetened applesauce or grated fresh apples.

1 cup rolled oats, uncooked
 ½ cup raw almonds
 ½ cup raisins
 4 cups plain lowfat yogurt or buttermilk

1. Mix together in a glass bowl the uncooked oats, almonds, raisins, and yogurt or buttermilk.
2. Cover the bowl tightly and store the muesli in the refrigerator overnight.

MAKES SIX 1/2-CUP SERVINGS.

PER SERVING: 360 calories, 13 g protein, 33 g carbohydrate, 9 g fat (2 g sat), 10 mg cholesterol, 3 g fiber, 115 mg sodium, 610 mg potassium, 340 mg calcium, & 80 mg magnesium.
 Count each serving as 1 Whole Grain Serving and 1/3 Fruit Serving.



Perfect Porridge

Oatmeal helps you feel full.

Starting your day with oatmeal is warm and comforting, but did you know that it may also help control weight? In one study, people who ate oatmeal for breakfast ate significantly less for lunch than people given an equal number of calories of sugared corn flakes. Oatmeal makes you feel fuller, since it is satisfying without being calorically dense.

Oatmeal is SIMPLE to make. Cook one part oats with two parts water. Consider using other liquids for variety: try fruit juice for extra flavor, or nonfat milk for a calcium boost. Stir in dried fruit, and top with grated apple, or sliced banana for extra nutrition.



This basic recipe is versatile and works well with other dried fruit, nuts, or seeds, and is wonderful topped with seasonal fresh fruit. Mix up your favorite combination to have a hearty breakfast on hand.