



Whole Grains: More than Just Bagels

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In the February 2007 edition of the American Dietetic Association Journal, a new whole grain fact sheet was released to the public to increase consumption and awareness of the health benefits of whole grains. This document was prepared by the Whole Grains Council, the Wheat Foods Council, and the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Its intent is to educate dietitians and their clients of the guidelines on whole grain consumption and readily available sources. This is also part of a larger branding effort by the Whole Grains Council that will soon feature a black and gold stamp on foods made with whole grains.

With increasing scientific evidence suggesting that whole grain consumption reduces risk of cancer, heart disease and diabetes and supports the healthy functioning of the gastrointestinal system, whole grains are now being viewed as an essential ingredient within a healthy diet.

Although I applaud the ADA for embracing whole grains, it was disappointing to discover many of the foods recommended lacked whole food sources of whole grains. Nutrient-rich whole grains, which retain their outer layers where their fiber and phytonutrients are concentrated, are far superior to nutrient-poor refined whole wheat. This was a missed opportunity for the ADA to educate the greater community about whole food grains and boost their presence in American markets and homes. Instead, the recommendations support the continued consumption of processed whole grains like breads, pastas and cookies. Merely consider the number of people who have celiac disease, an autoimmune reaction to wheat foods, for whom a wheat grain would be harmful and any gluten free grain would be a necessary alternative.

One grain in particular, quinoa, could have made an impressive debut on the ADA whole grain fact sheet. Quinoa, often hailed as the “supergrain of the future,” is a remarkable food. As a complete protein, quinoa contains all the essential amino acids that humans need for life. In its raw state it packs an incredible twenty-two grams of protein per cup, as much as a hamburger. Unfortunately, and perhaps due to the presence of the Wheat Foods Council, such a recommendation was not made.

In Davis, we are fortunate enough to have an educated community and readily available whole food grains in our local markets. However, the majority of people in the US and perhaps even California do not know about whole food grains like quinoa, millet, amaranth or great tasting brown rice. Encouraging them to eat more bagels and cookies will not help to solve this ignorance.

To see a copy of the Whole Grain Fact Sheet go to:

http://www.eatright.org/ada/files/Whole_Grains.pdf

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