

Grain ID Activity

This activity helps participants identify various grains and grain types, including whole and refined grains.

Learning Objectives

- Explain what Whole Grain-Rich (WGR) means under USDA school meal requirements
- Identify common whole grains used in the course
- Connect whole grain selections to menu compliance and student acceptance.

Materials Needed

- Various whole and refined grains are used in the program (additional ones can be added at the discretion of the instructor).

Activity Instructions

- **Grain Identification:** Examine each grain/grain derivative sample and discuss its name, texture, flavor, and common uses.
- **WGR Decision Challenge:** For each grain item, decide if it could count as WGR and what documentation would confirm compliance.
- **Menu Connection:** Choose one grain and discuss how it could be used in a student-friendly recipe.

USDA WGR Key Facts

- **WGR means at least 50% of the grain ingredients are whole grain; remaining grains must be enriched.**
- **At least 80% of weekly grain offerings must be WGR.**
- Whole grains contain bran, germ, and endosperm.
- Labels like “wheat” or “multigrain” do not guarantee WGR compliance.
- Ingredient lists and product documentation confirm WGR

Additional Information (Talking Points)

USDA WGR Facts

- **Whole Grain-Rich means at least 50% of the grain ingredients are whole grain**, and the remaining grains (if any) must be enriched.
- **At least 80% of the weekly grain offerings in school meals must be Whole Grain-Rich**, making it essential to correctly identify and select whole grain products.
- **Whole grains contain all three parts of the grain kernel—bran, germ, and endosperm**, which is why they provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains.
- **Items like brown rice, whole wheat pasta, oats, quinoa, bulgur, and whole grain cornmeal can all count as WGR** when they meet product formulation requirements.
- **Not all products labeled “wheat” or “multigrain” are Whole Grain-Rich**—the ingredient list and product documentation must confirm WGR compliance.
- **Using whole grains already featured in program recipes helps support WGR compliance** while keeping menus familiar and student-accepted.
- **Hands-on grain identification builds confidence** in selecting, preparing, and serving whole grains that meet USDA requirements.

Whole Grains Used in the Course

- **Brown Rice** – A whole grain rice with the bran intact, offering a chewy texture, nutty flavor, and versatility in pilafs, bowls, and side dishes.
- **Red Rice** – A whole grain rice variety with a reddish bran layer, slightly firmer texture, and earthy flavor that adds color and nutrition to meals.
- **Wild Rice** – A long, dark grain that is technically a grass seed, known for its chewy texture, nutty taste, and use in soups, salads, and pilafs.
- **Quinoa (red, white, or black)** – A high-protein, gluten-free whole grain with a mild, nutty flavor and fluffy texture when cooked.
- **Wheat Berries** – Whole, unrefined wheat kernels with a firm, chewy texture commonly used in grain salads and bowls.
- **Bulgur** – Cracked whole wheat that has been parboiled and dried, cooking quickly and commonly used in dishes like tabbouleh.
- **Whole Wheat Couscous** – Small semolina pellets made from whole wheat, offering a light texture while still providing whole grain benefits.
- **Whole Wheat Pasta** – Pasta made from whole wheat flour that retains the bran and germ, delivering more fiber and a slightly nutty flavor.
- **Oats (oat groats, steel-cut oats, oatmeal)** – Whole oat grains in various forms, known for their creamy texture when cooked and high soluble fiber content.
- **Corn Grits (whole grain)** – Coarsely ground whole corn with a hearty texture, often served as a savory side or breakfast grain.
- **Whole Grain Cornmeal** – Finely ground whole corn used in baked goods such as muffins while retaining fiber and nutrients.

- **Popcorn** – A whole grain corn variety that expands when heated and can be served as a whole grain snack when prepared without excess fat or salt.
- **Sorghum** – A gluten-free whole grain with a chewy texture similar to wheat berries that holds well on steam tables and in salads.