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DIY Grinding Your Own Grains

DISCOVER DIFFERENT KINDS OF SPECIALTY GRAINS, FROM THEIR TASTES AND TEXTURES TO DELICIOUS SERVING SUGGESTIONS.



Amaranth
Origin: Central America
Character: Grassy and earthy with a hint of pepper and slightly sticky when cooked.
Culinary Uses: Though amaranth is treated and eaten like a grain, it is actually a gluten-free seed full of nutritious amino acids. Amaranth can be popped like popcorn, cooked as a grain or ground into flour, which yields dense baked goods.



Barley
Origin: India, Ethiopia and South America
Character: Sweet, earthy, malty and chewy.
Culinary Uses: One of the oldest known foods, barley is used to brew beer and often ground into flour to add malty flavor to baked goods.



Buckwheat
Origin: East Asia
Character: Nutty, earthy, light and slightly chewy.
Culinary Uses: Despite its name, buckwheat is not wheat but another gluten-free plant cooked like a grain. Historically, buckwheat has been cooked into porridge or dumplings; it is also a key ingredient in soba noodles.



Bulgur
Origin: Middle East
Character: Nutty, wheaty, mild with a texture that is somewhat coarse and chewy.
Culinary Uses: Quick-cooking bulgur, often referred to as Middle Eastern pasta, is made by boiling, drying and cracking wheat, then removing the outer layers of bran. Bulgur is a primary ingredient in classic tabouli. It can be added to soups and meatballs and cooked into a pilaf.



Corn
Origin: Americas
Character: Sweet, toasted, usually coarse and toothsome.
Culinary Uses: Different varieties of corn are best in different applications. Some corn may be eaten fresh from the cob, while the dried kernels of other varieties can be ground into cornmeal, polenta or grits.



Emmer
Origin: Middle East
Character: Nutty, slightly sweet, full-bodied, firm and chewy.
Culinary Uses: A versatile heirloom grain, emmer flour can be used for flatbreads, pastas, biscuits or crackers; or to add flavor to leavened breads. It is also delicious whole, in a grain salad or pilaf.



Kamut
Origin: Africa
Character: Rich, sweet, buttery and firm.
Culinary Uses: An ancient, high-protein variety of wheat, kamut is the commercial name for khorasan wheat. Whole kamut grains can be soaked and added to salads, while kamut wheat is also baked into breads and other baked goods and used in pastas and beer.



Millet
Origin: East Asia
Character: Very mild and nutty; fluffy or creamy, depending on how it is cooked.
Culinary Uses: Naturally gluten-free millet was used to make noodles in ancient China, but in subsequent years millet porridge became popular throughout the world. It cooks quickly and may be eaten in sweet or savory dishes, milled into flour or used in alcoholic beverages.



Oats
Origin: Middle East
Character: Sweet, nutty, creamy and chewy.
Culinary Uses: Most commonly, oats are cooked into porridge and toasted and incorporated into muesli. Instant, old-fashioned rolled and steel-cut oats are typical varieties, along with whole grain oats, or groats.



Rice
Origin: China
Character: White rice is sweet and mild, while brown rice is richer and nuttier. The texture depends on how it is cooked; it may be sticky and chewy, firm or tender with a slight bite.
Culinary Uses: Rice is usually boiled or steamed to serve alongside a protein or main dish. It can also be cooked into a risotto, rolled into sushi or grape leaves, or sweetened for desserts, such as rice pudding.



Rye
Origin: Eastern and Central Europe
Character: Tangy, hearty, slightly spicy, sticky and dense.
Culinary Uses: Rye flour is used to add flavor to breads, such as pumpernickel. It also adds its bold, distinctive flavor to rye whiskey.



Spelt
Origin: Europe
Character: Nutty, sweet, mild and chewy.
Culinary Uses: Spelt flour is easy to work with, ideal for pastas, breads and other baked goods. The whole grains may be soaked overnight and cooked in fresh water until tender—the cooked grains can be added to salads and soups. Rolled spelt flakes can be prepared and eaten like oats.

Most cooks understand the importance of fresh, local and homegrown ingredients, such as sweet heirloom tomatoes from the farmers' market and herbs picked right in your backyard. Grains are no different. Once you taste the delicious, nuanced flavor of specialty heirloom grains, you can begin to think about wheat, corn, oats and more in a new way.

Modern farmers are experimenting with growing heirloom grains and grinding them in small batches. The resulting flours are entirely distinct from the shelf-stable flours at supermarkets. Specialty grains have character and variety, and may be tricky to work with at first due to different gluten contents and textures, but their uniqueness is exactly what makes them worth the effort.

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Emmer Focaccia

Thick, chewy and fragrant with rosemary and garlic, this focaccia just needs a drizzle of olive oil to make a perfect meal.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, using a handheld whisk, whisk together the water, yeast and ground emmer wheat and let stand until slightly foamy, about 10 minutes. Add the all-purpose flour, sugar, 2 Tbs. of the olive oil, the table salt and garlic.

Fit the mixer with the dough hook and beat on low speed until the dough begins to pull away from the sides of the bowl and form a ball, about 10 minutes. Transfer the dough to a well-floured work surface and gently shape into a ball.

Coat a baking sheet with 1 Tbs. of the olive oil. Place the dough on the baking sheet and coat the top with the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil. Wrap the baking sheet loosely with plastic wrap and place in a warm spot (about 80°F) until the dough has doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

Preheat an oven to 450°F.

Remove the plastic wrap from the baking sheet and gently stretch the dough evenly until it covers the bottom of the sheet. Using your fingertips, press gently into the dough to create small dimples evenly over the surface. Sprinkle the dough with the fleur de sel and rosemary. Wrap the baking sheet loosely with plastic wrap and place in a warm spot (about 80°F) until the dough has almost doubled in volume and is soft to the touch, about 30 minutes.

Remove the plastic wrap from the baking sheet. Bake until the focaccia is lightly browned on the surface and springs back lightly when pressed, 13 to 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and drizzle the focaccia with extra-virgin olive oil. Let cool for 10 minutes before cutting into squares. Makes 24 squares.

Recipe Courtesy of Dan Barber, Blue Hill.

1½ cups water, at room temperature
 4 tsp. active dry yeast
 2 cups finely ground emmer wheat
 2½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
 1 tsp. sugar
 5 Tbs. olive oil
 1¾ tsp. table salt
 1 garlic clove, finely minced
 ½ tsp. fleur de sel or kosher salt
 1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
 Extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling

Dinner Rolls

An easy upgrade to your breadbasket, these beautiful rolls have all the flavor of whole wheat, but with a soft, flaky texture. Sprinkle with sesame seeds or flaxseeds before baking for added crunch.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the dough hook, combine the yeast and water and let stand until slightly foamy, about 5 minutes. Add the spelt and emmer blend, flour, kosher salt and olive oil and beat on medium-low speed until just incorporated. Increase the speed to medium and beat for 5 minutes, stopping the mixer occasionally to scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Transfer the dough to a large flour-dusted bowl and cover with a clean kitchen towel. Let stand at room temperature until nearly doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface, punch it down and fold it over several times. Divide the dough into 15 pieces, each about 2 oz., and shape each piece into a ball. Place the dough balls on the prepared baking sheet, cover with a kitchen towel and place in a warm spot (about 80°F) until the dough has doubled in volume and has a slightly springy texture, about 1 hour.

Preheat an oven to 400°F.

Remove the kitchen towel, brush the tops of the rolls with water and sprinkle lightly with fleur de sel. Bake until the bottom edges are lightly golden, about 10 minutes. Makes 15 rolls.

Recipe Courtesy of Dan Barber, Blue Hill.

2½ tsp. active dry yeast
 1½ cups water, at room temperature
 2¼ cups finely ground spelt and emmer blend
 1¾ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
 1 Tbs. plus ½ tsp. kosher salt
 ¼ cup olive oil
 Fleur de sel for sprinkling

