

11-2006

# Kasha, Quinoa, and King Oatmeal

Winston J. Craig

*Andrews University*, [wcraig@andrews.edu](mailto:wcraig@andrews.edu)

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## Recommended Citation

Craig, Winston J., "Kasha, Quinoa, and King Oatmeal" (2006). *Lake Union Herald*. 627.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/627>

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# HEALTHY CHOICES

*Whole grains protect us against cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.*

## Kasha, Quinoa, and King Oatmeal

TO ENERGIZE YOUR LIFE

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

*Eighty percent of Americans eat whole grain products less than once a day.*

**W**hole grains are on a roll. Many food products now boast about their “whole grain goodness.” Whole grain muffins, breads, and cereals are commonplace. The new dietary guideline admonishes us to “make half your grains whole.” We are told to select whole grain products at least three times a day. Why the big push for whole grains?

Whole grains can lower your risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and bowel problems. In the Nurses’ Health Study of 75,000 women, those who ate three servings of whole grains a day had a 25 percent lower risk of heart disease and a 36 percent lower risk of stroke compared to those who ate no whole grains. In a similar study of male health professionals, those who ate 1.5 ounces of whole grains every day experienced an 18 percent lower risk of heart attack compared to those eating no whole grains.

In three large population studies, people who consumed at least three servings of whole grains per day had a 20 to 30 percent lower risk of diabetes than those who ate only one serving of whole grains a week. Compared with those consuming few whole grains, those with a high consumption of whole grains had 30 percent less cancer and lower overall mortality.

Whole grains, which are rich in dietary fiber, cause an increase in stool weight, improve bowel function, and may reduce constipation. The fiber-rich whole

grains help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories. Eating whole grains may therefore help with weight management.

Grains are low in sodium and fat, high in fiber, contain no cholesterol, and provide a number of important vitamins and minerals. Whole grains are more nutritious than refined grains because about 75 percent of the B vitamins, minerals (such as iron and magnesium), and phytochemicals (such as ferulic acid) are lost when the nutrient-rich bran and the germ are removed during the refining process. Only four B vitamins and iron are added back to refined grains, while none of the trace minerals, fiber, or health-promoting phytochemicals are returned.

What companies list on the package or wrapper could be misleading. For example, “whole grain” simply means that at least 51 percent of the flour is whole grain. “Made with whole grains” does not reveal how much whole grain is used, while “multigrain” means a mixture of grains, many of which could be refined. “Good source of whole grains” means there may be as little as eight grams of whole grains per serving. For truly whole grain, the label must say “100 percent whole grain.”

Tired of rice and pasta? Try cooking some quinoa, millet, couscous, buckwheat, or bulgur. For those with wheat allergies, spelt is normally well tolerated.

Winston Craig, R.D., Ph.D. is a professor of nutrition at Andrews University.

