

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume 12 Super Foods: Oats, Siblings and Cousins

This week we will continue our series on Super Foods mentioning in more specific detail Oats, its family members and their various health benefits.

OATS- Oats has long been labeled “heart healthy”, whatever that means today, because it has been thought to reduce the risk of heart disease. This much is definitely true, but to be more specific, whole grain oats provides high fiber which in turn lowers the blood cholesterol levels helping performance of the heart, our most magnificent organ. Oats are also low in calories and contain a healthy level of several minerals including magnesium, potassium, zinc, copper, manganese, selenium and thiamine.

Closely related variations or “siblings” of Oats are wheat germ and ground flaxseed. Both provide an enormously high level of protein. Flaxseed deserves special attention because they are singularly the best plant source of Omega -3 Fatty Acids. Flaxseeds are the leading source of lignins or plant estrogens which influence the balance of estrogens in the body and help protect against breast cancer.

Other healthy “cousins” of Oats are brown rice, barley, wheat, buckwheat, rye, millet, bulgur, quinoa, kamut, yellow corn, wild rice, spelt and couscous.

Eating oats and related family members regularly may reduce insulin resistance and aid in stabilizing blood sugar. As in anything else, the highest level of nutrition comes from the simplest form and the least cooked. In the case of Oats, I will now delve into the somewhat confusing controversy regarding Whole Grain, Whole Food, and whole lotta..well you know.

Sometimes you might see advertisements that tell you to avoid Whole grain foods because they are fattening. Well, isn't everything if you EAT enough of it? Especially comfort food and even more especially over the holidays? Seriously? Ask any person of size if their battle began with celery. I will go into the ridiculous notion of whole grains being fattening in a minute, but that topic isn't my biggest rant. That is saved for the trick advertising purposely meant to lead you astray. How about the big box of sugary something that has a Whole MULTI GRAIN label on it making you believe it's good for you?

So what is the best way to purchase what is good for you and avoid the potential tricks? Number one, start with knowledge. Grains are carbohydrates and not all “carbs” are created equal. Carbs are found in a vast array of foods from table sugar to vegetables to beans to whole grains. A teaspoon of sugar is a carb, as is a slice of whole grain bread. One is good, one not so much.

Here is the difference of our grains – The words WHOLE versus REFINED. Whole grains are actually health promoting while refined are not. Whole Grains are Oats, its siblings and cousins as mentioned above. Refined grains are white flour, white rice, white pasta, white bread, white, white white...If it is WHITE, it is probably processed (refined) and not only doesn't have a nutritional value, it is probably working against your health goals. On the fat farm, a leading cheer is “WHITE is TIGHT” and not in a good way.

Watch your combination of carbs. I recently heard from one client who is sure she is getting chubby from eating whole grain bread. I promise, you will get FULL on whole grain before you get fat. Whole foods fill. The reason for her weight gain, pure and simple, albeit after much discussion was the sugar.

Eating Whole foods with add on not so good carbs takes away from a really good thing. It's kind of like dating the quarterback but having to bring his baby sister on all your dates.

Another confusing aspect is when bad whole grains dress up as good whole grains. There are a couple of 80's songs by George Michael that are applicable here, but I digress.

Today's marketplace is doused with words like honey wheat, multi grain, hearty wheat, nutri grain, clean your gutters grain, etc. These terms DO NOT, I repeat DO NOT guarantee a nutritious whole grain. A REAL WHOLE GRAIN contains all three of these parts: THE BRAN, THE ENDOSPERM and THE GERM. It's the synergy of all these three that make WHOLE GRAINS healthy and helpful to your health, so don't fall for the posers.

Here's our recipe for the week: Apple-Cinnamon Porridge

½ cup of Steel Cut Whole Grain Oats

1 cup Apple Cider

1 ¼ cup lowfat milk

Pinch of Sea Salt

1 Golden Delicious Apple Peeled and Shredded

¼ teaspoon Cinnamon

1 container Greek Yogurt (make sure no aspartame)

1. In a dry skillet over medium heat, toast the oats until fragrant, usually three to four minutes, stir constantly. Set Aside
2. Combine cider and milk in a saucepan. Stir over medium heat until liquid is boiling around edge, add Sea Salt and gradually begin to stir in oats. Mix in Apple and Cinnamon. Cook uncovered until oats are tender, usually 20-25 minutes.
3. Serve it up, accompanied by your favorite yogurt.

As always, we welcome your questions and comments.

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