

**FARM****MILL****BAKER****GROCERY STORE**

# MILLING, GRAIN FOODS, AND NUTRITION

## UNDERSTANDING MILLING

Milling is one of the oldest forms of food processing. Millers grind grains from the farm into flour, cereals, and other ingredients used to make a wide variety of food options that are affordable and available year-round. Mills are located in communities across the country, serving as an indispensable link between raw grain and foods that have sustained and enriched people's lives for centuries.<sup>1</sup>

Wheat, corn, and oats must be processed by milling to become food ingredients. Milling unlocks nutrients from grains so they can then be made into delicious, nutritious foods. Flour, bleached flour, and vitamin enriched flour are products defined by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in regulation<sup>2</sup> and are identified on the food label. These definitions, which have been in existence for decades, describe what may be safely included in flour to improve its nutritional or baking properties.<sup>3</sup>

About 50% of all American-grown wheat is used by mills in the U.S. to make flour. The other half of the wheat crop is exported to countries that rely on high-quality, U.S. wheat for their own food production.

## GRAIN FOODS ARE IMPORTANT

Whole grains contain all parts of the grain kernel, while refined and enriched grains are finely ground and have had specific vitamins added back after milling. Research shows that it is important to include both in your diet because they provide different health benefits.<sup>4</sup>

**80%**

*of all grains eaten are staples like bread, cereal, and pasta*

Grain foods like bread, pasta, and tortillas are part of healthy diets here in the U.S. and around the world. Most refined grain foods are fortified with essential vitamins and minerals. They serve as important sources of critical nutrients, especially for pregnant women and children. Grain foods like bread, cereal, and pasta account for more than 80%<sup>5</sup> of all grains eaten. They play a different role in our diet than treats like cakes and cookies.

In total, grain foods account for less than 15%<sup>6</sup> of the total calories in the average American's diet. Further, enriched and fortified refined grain foods have become a primary source of dietary fiber – an underconsumed nutrient of public health concern in the United States. Bread provides important nutrition. It is the most commonly-consumed whole grain food. Breads also make about half of the total amount of refined grains that Americans eat.

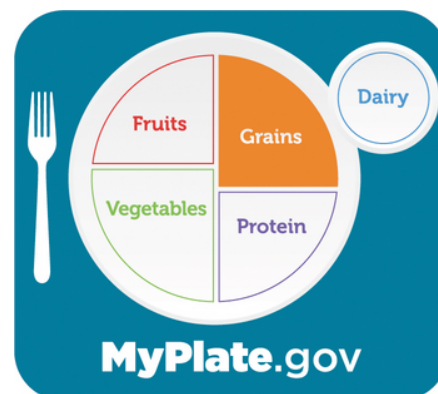
**LESS THAN  
15%**

*of total calories in the average American's diet come from grains*

## GRAINS ARE HEALTHY

Refined grains are often unfairly blamed for being unhealthy, yet they play a vital role in delivering the nutrients that Americans need, such as iron, folic acid, and B vitamins. Categorizing grain foods as “ultra-processed” and putting warning labels on them or restricting them from diets could have a negative impact on public health by making it harder for people to get nutrients they are already under-consuming.

Grain foods also play a key role in bridging nutrition gaps by making it easier to incorporate other food categories that we don’t eat enough of. Sandwiches, tacos, and burgers rank among the most popular ways that Americans eat vegetables and protein. Cereals increase the consumption of milk and fruit.



### GRAINS PROVIDE NUTRIENTS INCLUDING:

- FIBER
- THIAMIN
- FOLIC ACID
- B VITAMINS
- IRON
- ZINC

## SOURCES

**1** North American Millers’ Association. What Is Milling? Available at: <https://namamillers.org/consumer-resources/what-is-milling/>.

**2** Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services. 21 CFR 137.105. Available at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/part-137/section-137.105>.

**3** Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services. 21 CFR 137.165. Available at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-21/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-137/subpart-B/section-137.165>.

**4** U.S. Department of Agriculture. MyPlate - Grains. Available at: <https://www.myplate.gov/eat-healthy/grains>.

**5** Grain Foods Research Institute. History and Public Health Benefits of Enrichment and Fortification of Refined Grains. 2025. Available at: <https://grainfoodsresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Enrichment-and-Fortification-White-Paper.pdf>.

**6** Papanikolaou Y, Fulgoni VL. Grain Foods Are Contributors of Nutrient Density for American Adults and Help Close Nutrient Recommendation Gaps: Data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2009–2012. 2017. Available at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28805734/>.