

Multi-grain -- Multi-pounds?

by Linda Fiveson

Multigrain is a word that is more about attracting a “so called” healthy consumer than it is about being healthy. Since there is no list that indicates which grains a product labeled “multigrain” must contain or how these grains should be prepared, products with this term may contain any combination of wheat, corn, barely, rice, oats, flax, buckwheat, millet, etc. The one stipulation is that it has at least two different types of grains. Therefore, products labeled multigrain may contain only two grains or multiple amounts of them.

Multigrain products are made in “multi” ways. Multi means more than one, so a muffin bearing this claim could be made with many types of grains and appear to be very healthy... but it also could be loaded with sugar, salt, and trans-fats. So it's not necessarily a healthier option.

Whole grains are often thought to be the same as multigrains but they are not synonymous. Whole grains mean that you are getting the maximum amount of nutrients and fiber from the grains. Refined grains remove the germ and bran (the healthy parts), then are enriched with chemicals and bleached.

Unrefined grains are usually not processed; however, they may be a mixture of both unrefined and refined. What this means is that there are many questionable “foodlike stuffs” that come out of boxes, bags, cans and cartons that aren't “natural,” meaning they haven't been grown or had a life. Yet, they are packaged as being healthy, organic, “multigrain”, high fiber, etc. For instance, multi-grain crackers can contain whole wheat flour and whole oat flour, but they can also include refined rice flour, refined wheat flour, and many unhealthy ingredients, most of which are genetically modified oils and potato and corn starch. “Smart” multigrain cereals contain similar ingredients and can even contain high fructose corn syrup, multiple dyes, and other ingredients that will negate the qualities of anything whole grain, if there is even anything whole in it at all.

Manufacturers even go out of their way to make their products look and sound healthy. They use molasses for food coloring to mimic the darker color of whole-grains and add ingredients that create a dense, chewy texture. That means protein bars, (not very high in whole grains) can qualify. Never believe or trust any “healthy claims” on the front of the box. Look a little further into it and learn what the terminology means. Knowledge is power; when you “get it” and know how to read labels, there's never a question.

Remember, the ingredients listed first usually are the ones that make up the bulk of the item. MULTIGRAIN products, such as Tostitos, Krispies, Cheerios, Ritz Crackerfuls, Special K, Special K Crackers, Multigrain Burger Bun, Whole grain English muffin, “SKINNY BUNS”...what are these???? And to compound the confusion...what's with the gluten free???

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