

Marika Day's

Love Your Gut Month



In the second instalment of Love Your Gut Month, we're looking at nuts, seeds, grains and legumes – fibres that, like fruit and vegetables, are an essential part of a balanced diet.

They're also typically low in fat and rich in protein, good carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. Plus, they taste great and can be mixed into – or sprinkled on top of – many homemade meals.

A wonder in your gut

Your gut's microbiome is a complex ecosystem that requires a balanced diet. And nuts, seeds, grains and legumes are fundamental to overall gut health.

Their fibre breaks down differently to other foods, producing beneficial by-products like short-chain fatty acids, which reduce the risk of inflammation, heart disease and obesity.

Help prevent bowel cancer

Even if you are eating a diet full of fruits and vegetables, your risk of bowel cancer is still not as low when compared to a diet including nuts, seeds, grains and legumes.

Research indicates that eating around 90 grams of wholegrains a day will lower your risk by 17 per cent. Considering bowel cancer is the third most common type of cancer in Australia, these dietary fibres are very helpful ingredients indeed.

Still, they seem to get a bad rap in Australia

There's a bit of misunderstanding in Australia around nuts, seeds, grains and legumes.

Grains get a bad rap because of their association with food like white bread and instant noodles. But these are made using refined grains – e.g., white flour – with healthy components taken out. They're not particularly good for you.

What your gut craves are wholegrains, with the bran, germ and endosperm left intact, like in wholegrain bread. These grains have a totally different effect on your diet, and aren't just empty calories.

For everything else, it's really a matter of familiarity. While Australia has traditionally been more of a three-veg-and-meat sort of place, other countries have been using these ingredients as cheap and nutritious staples for centuries.

Glossary

Short-chain fatty acids: produced by gut bacteria fermenting fibre in your colon. They are the main energy source for cells living in your colon.

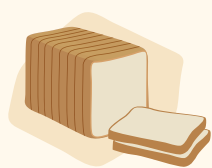
Bowel cancer: cancer located at the lower end of the digestive tract, in the colon or rectum.

Substituting fibres for a healthier diet

Getting more dietary fibre starts with changing your eating habits. It's really a matter of substituting ingredients to get more (and different) fibre while moving away from things like white flour in the process.

Think about these everyday ingredients and consider swapping in the alternative.

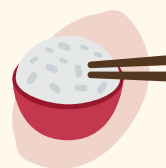
In fact, you can affect your gut within just 24 hours of making dietary changes.



White bread



Wholegrain bread



White rice



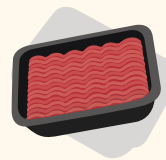
Brown rice



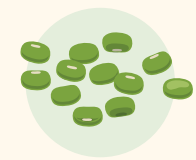
Cheese on toast



Nut butter on toast
(wholegrain bread, of course)



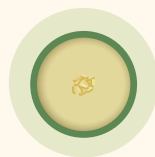
Minced meat



Lentils



Regular salad dressing



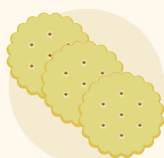
Tahini



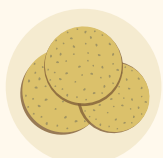
Couscous



Freekeh



White crackers



Grainy crackers

Using more nuts, seeds, grains and legumes in your cooking

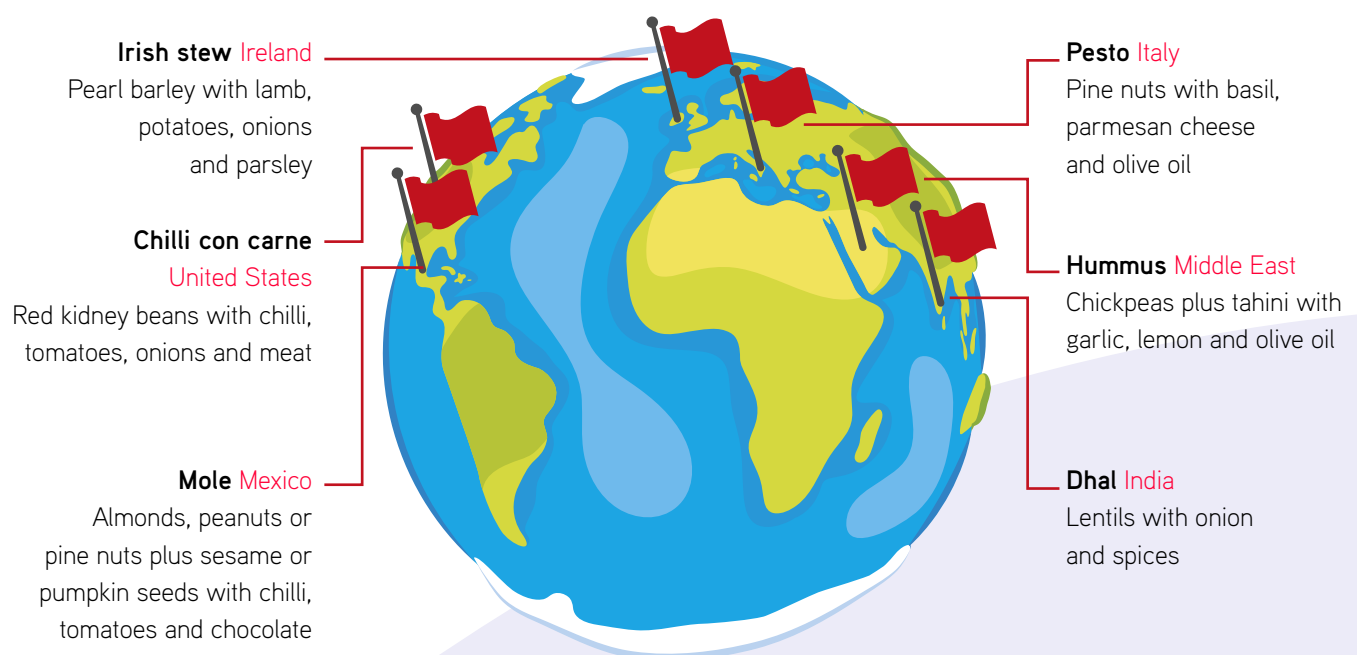
There are lots of simple ways to add more of these ingredients into your diet. The secret is to take baby steps, gradually incorporating new items into your repertoire.

And don't be put off if you don't love them right away. Changing your diet requires patience, and new flavours improve as they become more familiar to you.

- Convert your bolognese into a 50:50 mince and lentils masterpiece
- Sprinkle some seeds and nuts onto your cereal or oats
- Add nuts and seeds to your stir fry
- Snack on some hummus
- Have quinoa instead of rice with Asian dishes

A whole world of fibre

For much of the world, nuts, seeds, grains and legumes are common ingredients. You're probably already familiar with many of them.



Oatmeal, five ways

Oats are a great source of fibre. They're also extremely versatile.

Try to limit pre-mixed oat products, such as flavoured porridge and muesli bars, which often have a lot of added sugar. Instead, try your hand at your own creation! It will likely be healthier and tastier.

Here are five ways to level-up your oats:

1. **Sweet cocoa oats:**

Oats + milk + honey + cacao nibs + chopped dates

2. **Banana sundae oats:**

Oats + almond milk + peanut butter + sliced banana + honey + flaked coconut

3. **Savoury dinner oats:**

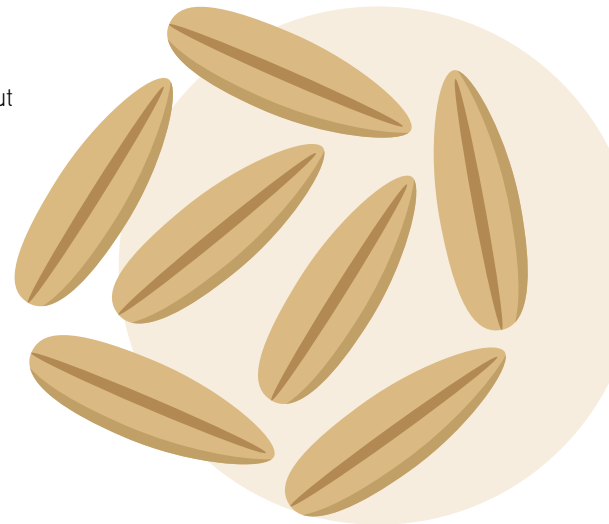
Oats + water + soy sauce + white miso paste + diced spring onion
+ fried egg + sesame seeds + chilli flakes

4. **Crunchy blueberry oats:**

Oats + Greek yoghurt + blueberries + pepitas + cinnamon + nutmeg

5. **Strawberry jam oats:**

Oats + chia seeds + Greek yoghurt + strawberries + honey + almond slivers



Wholemeal versus wholegrain

The difference between wholemeal and wholegrain has probably left you scratching your head on more than one occasion. Let's demystify this.

Wholemeal: Wholegrains that are milled into flour. Essentially, the grains are pre-digested in wholemeal products, which is less beneficial for your microbiome than consuming the grain whole. But wholemeal bread is still a good alternative to white bread.

Wholegrain: Wholegrain bread contains a mix of wholemeal flour and grains left in their original form – with an outer bran, middle endosperm and inner germ. Consuming grains whole gives you a chance to digest them for yourself, offering wonderful by-products as they break down. Wholegrain bread also usually contains seeds (and sometimes even nuts), for added fibre.

Breakfast: Tasty porridge with goji berries (serves 1)

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup rolled oats
- 3/4 cup milk of choice
- 1 tbsp goji berries
- 2 heaped tbsp natural Greek yoghurt
- 1 tsp honey or maple syrup

Directions:

- 1 Add oats and milk to a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Cook while stirring continuously for three minutes.
- 2 Add goji berries and syrup or honey. Stir to combine.
- 3 Serve in a bowl with a dollop of Greek yoghurt, an extra drizzle of honey or syrup, and a sprinkle of goji berries.

Lunch: Nourishing turmeric dhal (serves 4)**Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tsp ginger, grated
- 1 tsp curry powder
- 2 tsp ground turmeric
- 2 cups red lentils
- 1L vegetable stock
- 400mL coconut milk
- 1/2 head of cauliflower, florets only
- Brown basmati rice, to serve
- Green beans, to serve
- Greek yoghurt, to serve

Directions:

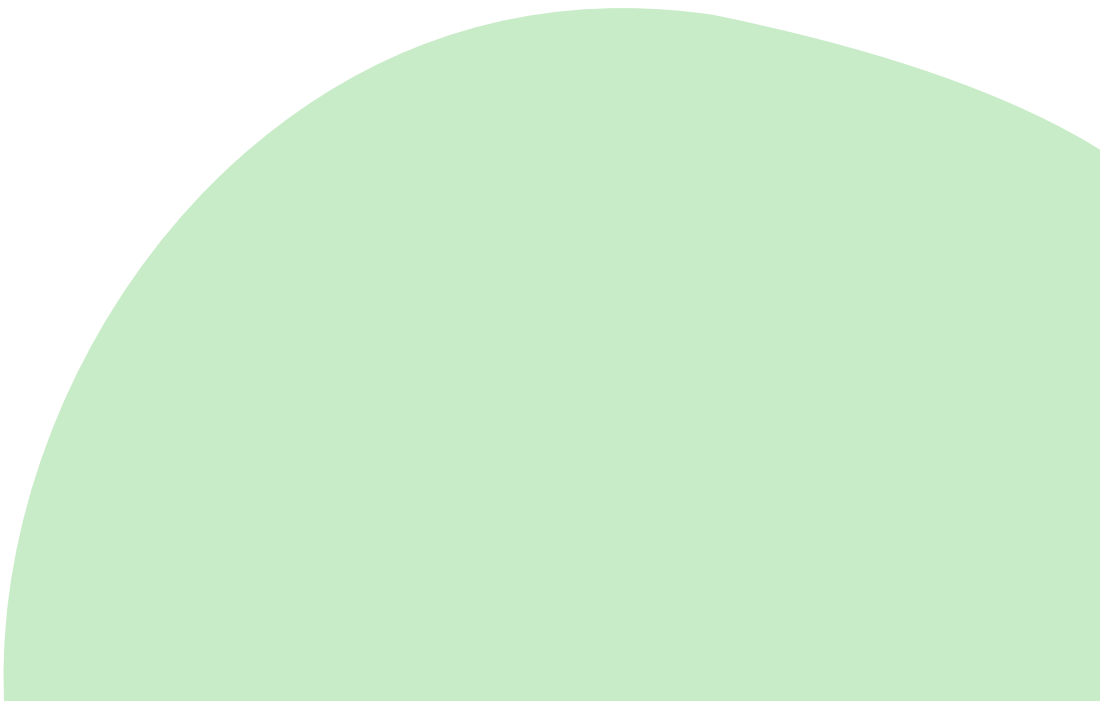
- 1 Add oil to a large saucepan over high heat and sauté onion for three minutes, or until soft.
- 2 Turn heat down to medium and add garlic, ginger, turmeric and curry powder to pan and cook for a further two minutes.
- 3 Rinse lentils, then add them to the pan with vegetable stock and half of the coconut milk.
- 4 Cook over low-medium heat, stirring frequently, for 10 minutes.
- 5 Add cauliflower with any extra water if dhal is becoming dry. Cook for a further 10–15 minutes, or until lentils are cooked through.
- 6 Stir through remaining coconut milk and serve with rice, green beans and a dollop of yoghurt.

Dinner: Delicious satay chicken (serves 2)

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 250g chicken breast, diced
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1/3 cup natural peanut butter
- 1/2 cup coconut milk
- 3/4 cup brown rice
- Broccoli, to serve
- Green beans, to serve

Directions:

- 1 In a bowl combine soy sauce, garlic and chicken breast. Allow to marinate in the fridge for 20 minutes.
 - 2 Meanwhile, cook rice to serve.
 - 3 Heat olive oil in a frypan. Add chicken and cook on medium-high heat for four minutes, or until browned.
 - 4 Add peanut butter to the pan and mix until it's melted and coats the chicken. Add coconut milk and stir through.
 - 5 Allow to simmer over low heat for another five minutes, or until chicken is cooked through.
 - 6 In the meantime, steam broccoli and green beans.
 - 7 Serve with cooked rice and steamed greens.
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Marika's DIY nut butter (serves 2)

Ingredients:

- 3 cups nuts (this could be one nut variety or a combination of a few. Almond, Brazil nut and cashew is one of my favourite mixes)
- 1/4 tsp salt
- Small amount of cinnamon, vanilla, maple syrup or honey (optional)

Directions:

- 1 Roast nuts in a pre-heated oven for 10 minutes at 180 degrees.
- 2 Place nuts into a food processor and blend until smooth and creamy, around 10 minutes.
- 3 Add salt plus cinnamon, vanilla, maple syrup or honey if using. Blend together.
- 4 Transfer nut butter into a sterilised jar.
- 5 Store in fridge for up to three weeks.

Pop these on the shopping list

- Rolled oats** good for many things, from porridge to homemade muesli bars
- Brown rice** creates a side for everything from fish to curries
- Wholegrain bread** toast-able, sandwich-able, possibly even pudding-able
- Mixed nuts** enjoy with your favourite drink
- Canned lentils** make into a dhal or mix in with your bolognese
- Canned chickpeas** add to a salad with fresh ingredients like cucumber and red onion
- Hummus** spread onto a wholegrain cracker or scoop up with sliced vegetables
- Wholegrain pasta** treat it as you would with any pasta dish – it's just a lot healthier
- Quinoa** use it as a side with vegetables and whatever protein takes your fancy
- Chia seeds** sprinkle on top of your porridge

For more information on bowel cancer, see bowelcanceraustralia.org and cancer.org.au

