

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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Did your New Year's Resolutions included any mention of eating better, eating more fiber, getting more whole grains or similar nutrition-related intentions? But you don't like oatmeal. Your kids won't eat 'brown bread'. Your husband refuses to touch brown rice. Wild rice takes too long to cook. What else is there? Don't give up! Have you tried any bulgur recently?

Bulgur - it's not a swear word, and it's not some exotic new grain. It's wheat. But it's probably one of the oldest processed foods in the world. Bulgur is made by steaming whole wheat grains until they are partially cooked. That opens up the starch cells so that the second cooking to finish it will take much less time. After the steaming, the wheat grains are dried then cracked or ground in to smaller pieces.

Today many people think of the Middle East as the source of bulgur. However it has long been used in most Mediterranean countries from Egypt to Italy. And ancient records show that it was made and used in China and India thousands of years ago.

Like coffee, bulgur is classified according to its grind. There are three common sizes on the market. Fine and medium grinds have been cracked into the smallest pieces. These are usually what's used to make tabbouleh salad. The coarse grind is more often used in pilaf. Pilaf is a dish of cooked rice or bulgur that starts with sauteing the grain in butter. This turns the grains golden brown and keeps them from sticking to each other. Then broth is added to finish the cooking. The seasoning can be fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry or seafood, and spices. In India it's served with curry.

Bulgur can also be served plain or used instead of rice in many dishes. The medium or coarse grinds can also be mixed into ground meat for meat balls or meat loaf. That not only extends the meat at lower cost, but decreases the fat and increases the fiber and other nutrients in the dish.

Increased fiber is one of the big benefits of using bulgur. It has almost as much bran as plain whole wheat grains, as well as most of the wheat germ. The 8 grams of fiber in a cup of cooked bulgur are double the amount in brown rice or oatmeal. Since most of us barely get 12 g a day, and the recommended amount is 35 g of fiber, a few servings of bulgur could be a big help to our diet.

But while the fiber is important, it may be the minerals and antioxidants in the germ that have the biggest health benefits. The antioxidants and other phytonutrients are thought to be the reason why people who eat plenty of whole grains have so much less colon cancer than those with more 'refined' diets. It's harder to measure in whole wheat than in fruits and vegetables, but whole wheat products including bulgur have almost as much as antioxidant power as the brighter colored foods.

Since bulgur still contains the wheat germ with its oil, it will get rancid if stored too long or at too warm a temperature. So if you buy a large bag of it, or only use it rarely, keeping it in the refrigerator or freezer is a good idea. But why buy it just to store it? Start by mixing a little cooked bulgur into cooked rice dishes. Or mix some into your meatloaf recipes along with the bread crumbs.

The recipe this week is for a warm cooked breakfast, nice on these cooler mornings. Bulgur doesn't get sticky the way oatmeal does, so don't expect it to taste or feel the same. And since you cover the pan and let it simmer on low, you can be getting the kids out of bed or putting on your makeup while it cooks. Use a mixture of dried

apricots, raisins, cranberries or blueberries. If you have some leftover dried fruit from Christmas baking that didn't get done, try using it along with some raisins in this recipe.

Happy New Eating!

### Hot Breakfast Bowl

1 cup bulgur, medium or coarse grind	½ cup dried fruit, chopped if necessary
2 ½ cups water	1/4 tsp cinnamon
½ cup skim milk	Pinch of cloves or nutmeg if desired
1/4 cup low calorie maple flavored syrup	1/4 cup chopped nuts

In medium saucepan combine bulgur and water. Bring to boil over high heat, cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer 20 minutes. Stir in the dried fruit and spices. Cook another 10 minutes. Remove from heat and divide into 4 serving bowls. Divide milk and syrup over bowls, then sprinkle with the chopped nuts. Serves 4.

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