

# Great Grains

You've planned your meal—a juicy chicken breast, a piece of delicate fish, or a thick, meaty Portobello burger. Now, what to have alongside?

Fortunately the grocery store offers many simple grain side dish mixes that require little more than some water, perhaps a wee bit of oil, and a quick cook. But are these quick-to-create dishes a healthful choice?


As with most prepared or semi-prepared foods, sodium is always a concern. These mixes are no exception. Some provide more than half of your daily sodium recommendation in just a one-cup serving. However, there are plenty with a sodium content that may easily fit within your daily limit. Recently, this primarily white rice-based food product category has expanded to include other types of grains. Many of these, such as brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat couscous offer more fiber, protein, and other nutrients. In addition, these options are an excellent source of whole grains in your diet. Current recommendations encourage Americans to make sure at least half their daily grains are whole grains—about three servings per day for the average person.



Some grain mixes offer easy, whole grain meal solutions.

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**Helpful Hints.** Think about these ideas when choosing and preparing a grain mix.

- ▶ **Watch Portions.** While a serving size of grain, according to the USDA, is one-half cup, most of the products list one cup as a serving. For that reason, most items in the chart are in one-cup portions. If you prefer the half-cup amount, you can cut all the nutritional information in half as well.
- ▶ **Veggie Time.** To boost the nutrient power, stir in leftover vegetables, or add, frozen, or canned broccoli, peppers, carrots, or other favorite vegetables.
- ▶ **Whole Grain Check.** These grain dishes offer an easy opportunity to get a whole grain serving into your day. Check the ingredient list to be sure a whole grain is listed first, such as brown rice, quinoa, or wheat berries. You also can check for the Whole Grain Stamp from the Whole Grains Council (wholegrainscouncil.org), which will tell you how many grams of whole grains are in each food product (18 grams is one serving), however this is an optional label and may not be on all packages. 

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD

## Great Grains Nutritional Comparison

✓ = **EN's Picks.** As with all EN comparisons, this is only a sampling of products. Picks contain no more than 520 mg sodium (23% DV), at least 3 g fiber (11% DV), and a whole grain listed as the first ingredient.



GRAIN MIX	Serving Size	Calories	Total Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Protein (g)	First Ingredient
✓ 365 7-Grain & Lentil Blend	1c	250	6	1	41	350	6	4	Wheat Berries
✓ 365 Barley & Green Lentils	1c	280	3.5	0.5	44	410	9	10	Barley
✓ 365 Long Grain Brown & Wild Rice	1c	230	4	1	44	490	3	4	Brown Rice
365 Organic Lemon & Herb Pearled Couscous	1c	310	8	1	48	710	2	8	Durum Wheat
365 Organic Spanish Rice Pilaf	1c	440	8	0	84	1420	2	8	White Rice
Cucina & Amore Quinoa Meal Mango & Jalapeno	112g	110	2	0	19	240	2	3	Quinoa
Cucina & Amore Quinoa Meal Basil Pesto	112g	260	18	2	19	520	2	5	Quinoa
DaVinci Imported Risotto with Asparagus	45g*	200	5.5	2	34	360	3	3	White Rice
Goya Low Sodium Yellow Rice	1c	368	6	0	70	280	2	6	White Rice
Goya Paella Valenciana	1c	350	4	0	70	1200	2	6	White Rice
✓ Goya Quinoa Blend Black Beans, Peppers, & Spices	1c	190	5	0.5	33	440	3	5	Brown Rice
Goya Rice & Red Beans	1c	416	10	2	68	1340	6	8	White Rice
Knorr Rice Sides Chicken Flavor Broccoli	1c	260	5.5	1	45	700	2	6	Long Grain White Rice
Lundberg Organic Whole Grain Black Beans & Rice	1c	210	2	0	44	480	5	6	Arborio Rice
✓ Lundberg Organic Sprouted Chile Verde Rice	1c	200	2	0	42	480	3	5	Sprouted Long Grain Brown Rice
✓ Lundberg Organic Sprouted Thai Red Curry rice	1c	200	2	0	42	480	4	5	Sprouted Long Grain Brown Rice
✓ Lundberg Organic Whole Grain Quinoa & Rice Basil and Red Pepper	1c	210	2	0	43	480	3	5	Brown Rice
✓ Lundberg Organic Whole Grain Jambalaya Rice	1c	220	2	0	46	470	3	4	Brown Rice
✓ Lundberg Organic Whole Grain Quinoa & Rice Rosemary Blend	1c	210	2	0	43	470	3	5	Brown Rice
Lundberg Traditional Risotto Butternut Squash	1c	240	4.5	1.5	44	690	1	7	Arborio Rice
✓ Nature's Earthly Choice Easy Quinoa Garden Vegetable	50g*	170	2.5	0	24	230	3	7	Quinoa
Near East Original Long Grain & Wild Rice	1c	220	4	2	43	750	1	5	Long Grain White Rice
✓ Near East Quinoa Blend Rosemary & Olive Oil	1c	280	2	0	54	410	4	8	Quinoa
Near East Whole Grain Blends Brown Rice Pilaf	1c	220	4.5	2.5	42	630	2	5	Brown Rice
✓ Near East Whole Grain Blends Roasted Garlic & Pecan	1c	240	8	1	37	480	3	6	Brown Rice
Rice a Roni Chicken Flavor Low Sodium	1c	270	5	1	51	660	2	7	White Rice
✓ Roland Israeli Couscous Roasted Garlic Whole Wheat	60g*	230	3	1	44	480	4	7	Whole Wheat Couscous
✓ Roland Quinoa Garden Vegetable	45g*	160	2.5	0	29	240	3	6	Quinoa
✓ Seeds of Change Caribbean Style Rice with Brown Rice & Red Beans	1c	250	3	0	50	360	5	6	Brown Rice
✓ Seeds of Change Quinoa & Brown Rice with Garlic	1c	240	3.5	0.5	47	400	3	6	Brown Rice
✓ Seeds of Change Seven Whole Grains	1c	240	3	0	47	340	4	6	Brown Rice
Trader Joe's Rice Orzo Pilaf Mix	1c	320	9	5	5	680	2	7	White Rice
Uncle Ben's 5 Grain Medley Quinoa Pilaf	1c	200	1.5	0	41	670	3	6	Brown Rice
✓ Uncle Ben's Brown Rice & Quinoa, Roasted Red Pepper	1c	200	2	0	40	510	3	6	Brown Rice
Uncle Ben's Ready Whole Grain Medley	1c	210	2.5	0	38	660	3	6	Brown Rice
Vigo Black Beans & Rice	1c	190	1	0	39	950	5	7	White Rice
Vigo Low Sodium Yellow Rice	1c	190	0	0	43	45	0.5	5	White Rice

Note: c=cup, g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value, daily requirement based on 2,000 calories/day diet. All serving sizes and nutritional information on products are based on food package label, following listed directions for preparation; the only exceptions are products identified \*, which denotes the information on product label is for dry mix.