

Did You Know?



As the holidays quickly approach, many of us are planning our gatherings with family and friends, right down to the festive food fare—from tender, juicy [turkey](#) and stuffing to yummy side dishes, which may include an assortment of fruits and veggies with custom-made dishes like candied [sweet potatoes](#) and the best part

of the holiday—the dessert! Certainly, the star attraction this time of year are the holiday cookies! Who can resist just one nibble?

Well, ARS scientists are baking up some “healthier” holiday cookies of their own—in the name of research, of course! Researchers at the **ARS Soft Wheat Quality Laboratory** in Wooster, OH, are identifying ways to make flour with more whole grains. Many Americans don’t eat enough whole grains and dietary fiber. Consumption of whole grains, in some studies, has been associated with reduced risk of heart disease (plaque buildup in the walls of the arteries), which can lead to heart attack or stroke. In fact, USDA’s [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) recommends that we consume at least half of all grains as whole grains, and The National Academies’ [Institute of Medicine](#) recommends the following daily fiber intake: men (age 50 and younger) – 38 grams, men (age 51 and older) – 30 grams, women (age 50 and younger) – 25 grams, and women (age 51 and older) – 21 grams.

Scientists at the Wooster lab are trying to determine how much dietary fiber is really in today’s whole-grain soft-wheat flours with the goal of developing wheat with even more nutritional value. Soft wheat is used to make

crackers, cakes, cookies, breakfast bars, pancakes, waffles, flour tortillas, some snack chips and other products. In contrast, hard wheat is used to make things like pasta.

Using new test methods to determine dietary fiber levels of whole-grain flours made from soft wheat, ARS scientists found that soft-wheat whole-grain flours have, on average, about 14.8 grams of dietary fiber in each 100 grams of flour. Though it’s only slightly higher than the most widely referred to U.S. estimate, this information is valuable because it could be used in new editions of nutritional databases to help present a more comprehensive picture. Many food makers and regulatory agencies like the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which is responsible for food labeling, may use this information when developing nutrient data labels.

Though there are many health sources of fiber, beans being high on the list—ARS has research on that, too—it’s nice to know that one day we can snack happily and healthily (and in moderation, of course) without guilt.

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