FARRO

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
Farro, also known as the pharaoh’s wheat, originated in Egypt centuries ago and is a member of the wheat family. During their occupation of Egypt, ancient Roman legions allegedly carried farro in their rations because of its nutritious properties. Eventually, this wholesome grain made its way to Italy, serving as a “healthy” wheat pasta substitute. While it has lost popularity during modern times because it is a low-yielding wheat grain compared with other varieties, farro is still grown, both wild and cultivated. Recently, it has reemerged as a popular food in Italy, parts of Europe, Asia and parts of the Middle East.

As a distinct cousin of modern wheat, farro is often mistaken for spelt. With a nutty flavor and chewy texture, the small brown kernels are a useful substitute for other grains or rice in hearty soups and salads. The grain resembles a plumper barley grain. High in fiber and protein, and low in fat and calories, farro makes for a healthy alternative to other grains. Its similarities to couscous and quinoa, as well as its versatility in the kitchen, make farro a must-try in the culinary industry.

Healthy ingredient contribution

- **CARBOHYDRATES:** Farro is an excellent source of complex carbohydrates, specifically cyanogenic glucosides that have been found to stimulate the immune system, regulate blood sugar levels and lower cholesterol.
- **FIBER:** Farro is a great source of fiber, containing more than other “healthy grains,” such as brown rice and quinoa.
- **PROTEIN:** As an excellent source of protein, farro can form a complete source of protein in vegetarian dishes when paired with legumes (beans, peas or lentils).
- **GLUTEN:** Farro contains gluten, but is in a form that is said to be easier for people with intolerances to digest.
- **VITAMINS:** Farro contains vitamin B3, also known as niacin, which assists in metabolizing carbohydrates, fats and proteins.
- **MINERALS:** Farro is a good source of vital minerals such as zinc, magnesium and iron.
- **ANTIOXIDANTS:** Farro contains lignans that give it antioxidant properties.

Varieties and uses

- **WHOLE GRAIN:** cooks slower, but many advise that you purchase whole grain farro and crack it yourself in a blender or coffee grinder to maintain freshness.
- **CRACKED GRAIN:** cooks faster while still maintaining a hearty, chewy texture.

Storage

- Store farro in a tightly-sealed plastic or glass container in a cool, dry and dark location.
- The grain should be tightly wrapped for refrigerator or freezer storage.

Serving size

½ cup serving cooked faro = approximately 100 calories, 1 gram fat, 4 grams protein, 3.5 grams dietary fiber

Contributions to this article were made by Elizabeth Rowe and Tim Foxworth. The following recipe was tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.
Method:
1. Place farro in large saucepan; cover with broth. Bring to a boil. Cover; reduce heat. Simmer 45 minutes to 1 hour or until grains are cooked through.

2. Preheat grill or grill pan to medium-high heat.

3. Toss zucchini and squash in 1 t. extra-virgin olive oil; arrange in single layer on a grill rack. Grill 4 minutes on each side or until tender and well marked. Remove vegetables to a cutting board; chop into bite-sized pieces.

4. In large mixing bowl, combine remaining ingredients with cooked farro and grilled vegetables. Mix well; serve immediately.

Nutrition Information

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