10 tips for purchasing and storing whole-grain foods

Whole grains are important sources of nutrients such as zinc, magnesium, B vitamins, and fiber. There are many choices available to make half your grains whole grains. But whole-grain foods should be handled with care. Over time and if not properly stored, oils in whole grains can cause spoilage. Consider these tips to select whole-grain products and keep them fresh and safe to eat.

1. **search the label**
   - Whole grains can be an easy choice when preparing meals. Choose whole-grain breads, breakfast cereals, and pastas. Look at the Nutrition Facts labels and ingredients lists to find choices lower in sodium, saturated (solid) fat, and added sugars.

2. **look for the word “whole” at the beginning of the ingredients list**
   - Some whole-grain ingredients include whole oats, whole-wheat flour, whole-grain corn, whole-grain brown rice, and whole rye. Foods that say “multi-grain,” “100% wheat,” “high fiber,” or are brown in color may not be a whole-grain product.

3. **kids can choose whole grains**
   - Your kids can choose whole grains at school. Encourage healthier choices at home by adding whole grains into their favorite recipes, meals, and snacks.

4. **find the fiber on label**
   - If the product provides at least 3 grams of fiber per serving, it is a good source of fiber. If it contains 5 or more grams of fiber per serving, it is an excellent source of fiber.

5. **is gluten in whole grains?**
   - People who can’t eat wheat gluten can eat whole grains if they choose carefully. There are many whole-grain products, such as buckwheat, certified gluten-free oats or oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, wild rice, and quinoa that fit gluten-free diet needs.

6. **check for freshness**
   - Buy whole-grain products that are tightly packaged and well sealed. Grains should always look and smell fresh. Also, check the expiration date and storage guidelines on the package.

7. **keep a lid on it**
   - When storing whole grains from bulk bins, use containers with tight-fitting lids and keep in a cool, dry location. A sealed container is important for maintaining freshness and reducing bug infestations.

8. **buy what you need**
   - Purchase smaller quantities of whole-grain products to reduce spoilage. Most grains in sealed packaging can be kept in the freezer.

9. **wrap it up**
   - Whole-grain bread is best stored at room temperature in its original packaging, tightly closed with a quick-lock or twist tie. The refrigerator will cause bread to lose moisture quickly and become stale. Properly wrapped bread will store well in the freezer.

10. **what’s the shelf life?**
    - Since the oil in various whole-grain flours differs, the shelf life varies too. Most whole-grain flours keep well in the refrigerator for 2 to 3 months and in the freezer for 6 to 8 months. Cooked brown rice can be refrigerated 3 to 5 days and can be frozen up to 6 months.

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.