

IN PRAISE OF GRAINS

By Andrew Sterman

With so much food variety today—and so many people’s health sabotaged by their food choices—one thing we can count on is a steady stream of food fads. To be more respectful, let’s call them trends. To someone following a new trend, of course, it seems totally sensible, the only questions left are, “What took me so long to find this!?” and “What in the world is wrong with everybody else!?”

Personally, I like to study these trends. They can offer some interesting pieces of the puzzle of diet and health—some new research or some new angles. They offer corrections to common excesses (although often introduce their own) and sometimes promote new foods into the marketplace that become fixtures long after the fad has faded.

I often see patients participating in the attempt to avoid grains. A person comes in and as we discuss their diet in relation to their main health concerns. I hear about fish, meat, kale and other vegetables, then . . . nothing. I ask about grains and I hear, “Oh, I try to avoid grains, avoid carbs!” If their pulses are good and they seem healthy, balanced and happy, then that’s fine. But too often the spleen-stomach pulses are very weak, sometimes nearly collapsed, with various compensations appearing, such as liver heat; and upon a few more questions, the person describes feeling ungrounded, confused as to why they don’t feel well, emotionally rocky—as if any wind that comes can blow their ship precariously off-course. They desperately lack ballast from the grounding energy of grains. Further, whole grains with their fiber give the peristalsis something to work with. For many who avoid grains, peristalsis and elimination have become problematic. For a healthy person, well-prepared grains are grounding, calming, and energizing.

There are times to abstain from grains, either for very specific health reasons or for symbolically withdrawing from the world as part of certain spiritual practices, but Chinese medicine never recommends a single diet for everyone based on broad theoretical grounds, such as ‘humans can’t digest grains.’ For most people, eating grains more skillfully is vastly better than either consuming carbs unaware (sugar, snacks, bread, pasta, pizza) or abstaining from them altogether.

Nevertheless, trends are welcome, it’s not good to be too repetitive, and new trends help us think in new ways. Yet, even if grains were as unsuited for human consumption as extremists claim, it simply isn’t possible to sustain a Paleo-type diet worldwide, even for those who currently could afford it. There isn’t enough grass or grain in the world to feed the cattle needed for more than a fraction of our population to eat this way. Leaving animal empathy aside for the moment, the no-carb plan is available for only a small elite of society, an issue worth serious thought.

Rather than debate strongly held views, let’s look at the different grains for their benefits and warnings from the viewpoint of Chinese medicine dietary therapy.

Chinese medicine dietetics does acknowledge potential problems with grains (and also includes voluntary grain abstention as part of advanced spiritual practice). Differentiation is important, however, in order to avoid causing new problems while trying to clear older ones (something we see in our clinics far too often). Let’s deal with the warnings for grain consumption clearly and concisely before focusing on their many benefits.

Simply said, individuals with celiac disease must avoid gluten completely. Celiac is an auto-immune condition in which a person reacts to gluten causing inflammation and serious damage. Gluten does not cause the damage itself, rather, the auto-immune inflammation is responsible. Complete abstinence from glutinous grains is therefore important: no wheat, barley and rye. Oats contain no gluten, but cross-contamination in

the field or processing plant is common (safely gluten-free oats are available). The genetic marker for celiac disease is present in about 1 out of every 150 people, although many with the genetic marker do not develop the condition. Further, some without the genetic marker develop celiac (or a virtual twin condition), particularly those with diabetes or other serious digestive weakness. Since confirmed diagnosis requires not only genetic sampling but successful symptom relief during a strict gluten-free trial diet (and nothing other than gluten-free diet is required for disease management) it makes sense to begin with the gluten-free diet and simply enjoy the benefits.

Others have gluten sensitivity. Rather than the permanent gluten-intolerance of celiac, gluten sensitivity occurs when digestion weakens and the gluten from wheat, rye and barley causes a variety of symptoms including lethargy after eating, constipation or diarrhea (often alternating), inflammation, bloating, distention, and so forth. Allowed to continue, the integrity of the small intestine lining can be compromised (increased permeability or ‘leaky gut syndrome’), at which point remote symptoms can be traced back to gluten problems. Remote symptoms can include joint problems, allergies, muscle weakness, exhaustion, high blood pressure, repeating cold or flu cycles, irritability, emotional instability, migraine, heart disease, vision problems, hearing problems, and so forth. Although this may sound extreme, following these problems back to gut inflammation in many individuals is direct, logical, and demonstrable.

Individuals with gluten sensitivity improve quickly on a gluten-free diet, as do celiac patients, but the difference is that after time, gluten can be reintroduced (skillfully), although some choose to remain gluten-free. Gluten-free is not the same as grain-free; the benefits of grain for grounding and digestive health can be had with the non-glutinous grains.

GRAINS IN CHINESE MEDICINE

Traditionally, grains are classified as sticky or not-sticky. All glutinous grains are sticky (wheat, rye, barley) and some of the non-glutinous grains are as well (short grain rice, sushi rice, sticky rice, etc.) Non-sticky grains—sometimes called the safe grains—include long grain rice, millet, sorghum, corn and the pseudo-grains buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth and teff. (True grains are all in the grass family: rice, wheat, oats, corn, barley, rye, millet, sorghum. Pseudo-grains are seeds used as grains that are not botanically in the cereal grass family: buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth, teff. In the kitchen, they are all grains.) Further, some grains are warming while others are neutral or even perhaps cooling. The glutinous grains are the principal warming grains, and naturally their use is not advisable for people who tend toward inflammation or heat conditions (even in their best organic or antique versions).

Nevertheless, there are several interesting and game-changing ways of looking at grains as more than just carbs that feed blood sugar levels.

First, grains are the principal foods that not only provide nutrition but resonate with (and strengthen) the organs most directly responsible for basic digestion—the stomach, small intestine, spleen and pancreas. In the *wu xing*/Five Element system, this is Earth, the center of all health. Grains nourish Earth element. Shifting the diet to animal food strongly shifts the energetic focus to liver/Wood Element while reducing support for digestion itself (Earth-center). Liver overacting on stomach and spleen-pancreas is very common; raising protein and reducing grain will make maintaining this harmony even more difficult.

Second, integrating Western and Chinese medical insights here, it is interesting to note that:

•The upper segment of the small intestine (duodenum) has a yin lining

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much like the stomach, capable of handling strong digestive acids. The duodenum further digests meats and allows passage of the amino acids to the liver for synthesis into our proteins. The duodenum, therefore can be seen as an extension of the stomach in Chinese medical terms.

• The middle section of the small intestine (jejunum) digests and allows passage to carbohydrates and lipids, with crucial assistance of pancreatic enzymes and the microbes in residence. The jejunum can be seen as the location of much of the digestive function of spleen-pancreas in Chinese medical terms.

• The lower section of the small intestine (ileum) allows fermentation of what is not digested by the duodenum (proteins) and jejunum (carbs and lipids). Here, vast microbial armies create essential vitamins that are absorbed through the ileum walls.

With this in mind, it is clear that diets heavy in protein but light in grains will rely on the duodenum while relatively ignoring the jejunum. The ileum—which perhaps did the most work in early humans with all their rough, gathered wild food—either is relatively ignored, as in the standard modern diet, or fairly well used, if non-nutritive fibers are added. Without grains for the jejunum and whole grains (and other roughage) for the ileum, a high-protein, animal-food reliant diet is not well-balanced from a digestive point of view. Predictably, inflammation and excess heat conditions easily arise.

What to do if grains don't digest well? I recommend a prudent, stepped approach:

• Reduce or eliminate sugar. (It's not honest to blame grains for problems caused by refined sugar, honey, etc., or over-reliance on refined carbs such as bread and pasta or processed snacks.) Avoid eating sugar after a meal that includes grain—the spleen-pancreas will consider carb digestion unnecessary and leave complex carbs to ferment while absorbing simple sugars for energy.

• Simplify meal combinations. Manageable combinations are crucial to digestive health; simpler combinations digest more efficiently. Whether we make small changes or enact strict food separations, this powerful method is traditional in Chinese medicine dietetics and can equally be supported by western digestive model thinking. Have desserts only occasionally—sweets after meals throw a wrench into the delicate works, not so much from a calorie point of view as the point made above on added sugar taxing spleen-pancreas function, timing, and eventually integrity.

• Add sprouts. Sprouts are very important in Chinese medicine dietetics to aid digestion of grains. If you're an herbalist you'll have barley sprouts and rice sprouts on hand, but any sprouts will help. Best is to wilt them in a hot pan to protect the digestion from the cold energetic of mung sprouts (for example) as you gain their benefits.

• Rotate grains. Grains are staple foods in all cultures, but too much of the same grain can cause stagnation. Rotating (and combining) grains is great for cuisine and health.

If grains continue to be problematic, abstaining from grains may be necessary in the following order:

• First, avoid wheat. Some people can reintroduce wheat when they become healthier, if so, begin with organically grown (Roundup-free) wheats, and especially the antique wheats: Kamut, farro/spelt, einkorn and emmer.

• If necessary, avoid the other glutinous grains, barley and rye.

• Some are allergic to corn. (Most corn today is genetically modified. Insist on organic corn, non-GMO, it is far easier to digest. Our food should not be modified for purposes that are not focused on human health, as is the case with GMO corn.)

It is rare but not unheard of to be intolerant of rice, millet and the pseu-

do-grains. If all grains must be avoided, an individual's digestion-metabolism is severely weakened. Grain abstention and an otherwise careful diet can help rest the spleen-pancreas and small intestine systems. Herbal and acupuncture treatments are advised but not strictly necessary if dietary skills are good. Chances are, however, that there's dietary cheating going on in the sweet-taste department, and overall, what is needed is to strictly avoid sugar and sugar substitutes in order to allow the body to remember how to digest and assimilate energy from grains. This will solve the sugar cravings and the associated symptoms of lethargy, insomnia, brain-fog and so forth.

MAJOR GRAINS AND THEIR BENEFITS

First, the **non-glutinous** or generally safe grains.

Rice—Beyond simply being a food, rice strongly aids digestion—as a very gentle medicinal herb—harmonizing spleen-pancreas and stomach. Steamed rice and congee soothe digestion and are great for generating fluid and yin, thereby supporting the building of blood and hormones. Choose brown rice to help clear stagnation and constipation. White rice is often dismissed, which is a mistake. It is the most soothing grain and helps stabilize diarrhea. Long grain rice is the safest choice. Use short grain or sticky rice only during cold weather; in summer it easily traps heat inside, making hot and humid weather more challenging.

Millet—Millet is very soothing and the most neutral of all the grains. It is eaten whole, and is a good choice for those who want the soothing quality of white rice but desire to eat whole grains. It drains dampness by stimulating urination, but is at the same time hydrating to stomach and yin resources overall. Millet is very important for its anti-inflammatory qualities and helps to soothe gluten damage. Millet is good for yin deficiency, including hot flashes from hormone deficiency, and, because of its high silica content, millet is the go-to grain for helping people repair fractures or maintain strong bones.

Oats—Oats also harmonize the stomach with the spleen-pancreas, strongly aiding digestion. Oats relieve indigestion, constipation, and bloating. Oats treat diarrhea, too—perhaps counterintuitive, but often the intestines need to be cleared of what is offending digestion in order to end a cycle of diarrhea. Oats provide the fiber to do this while also being gelatinous and soothing. Much has been made of the soluble fiber in oats carrying cholesterol out of the system, but oats also improve the way insulin is utilized and can calm the spirit.

Corn—Many people misunderstand corn and diet planners often avoid it, citing its high glycemic index. But sweet corn is a relatively modern development; the long history of corn is about corn as grain (now used for polenta, grits, baking, etc.) I call this field corn or grain corn. In fact, corn regulates blood sugar (guidance and monitoring is needed for diabetics, but its use is possible). Corn is an important grain for regaining weight if emaciated due to illness or surgery. Popcorn is very constipating; better to use wet-cooked methods such as polenta, grits, tamales, etc. GMO corn is not fit for human consumption. (Among other modifications, toxins have been programmed into GMO corn to kill insects during storage.) Corn is one of the foods where organic sourcing is very important.

The warnings for the **glutinous grains** have been mentioned above. Here let's consider their benefits. When using glutinous grains, a corner of your attention must remain aware of their potential problems in order to inform wise food choices, but it's very important to enjoy your food with a free heart and mind. Make wise choices, then proceed to enjoy without second guessing.

Wheat—If wheat is well-tolerated, it is very useful in cool weather; wheat is a very warming grain. Again, wet-preparations are better than dry, but they are rarely used. (Wheat grain broth, for example, is soothing for the emotions and supports restful sleep.) Baking is a dry-cooking

method, and making toast is twice-dry-cooking. Wheat porridge (cream of wheat), couscous or bulgur preparations are better choices. Used this way, wheat can be deeply strengthening: tonifying a weak, sore back with weak knees. Whole wheat treats constipation and hemorrhoids, but too much refined wheat (white flour, bread, pasta) easily leads to dampness. Ancient wheats provide many of these benefits but are easier to digest (and therefore healthier). Early wheats are spelt (farro), emmer, einkorn and Kamut.

Barley—Barley is arguably the original grain that began the agricultural revolution (and thus civilization itself). Today used minimally, barley was, until fairly recently, the principal grain of western culture. Whole barley warms for cold weather, but pearled barley is slightly cooling, better for summer or strongly heated homes. Pearled barley is drying, so much so that it is traditionally used to stop lactation after weaning a baby. Whole barley moistens and soothes; therefore it is very important for soothing oral sores, sore throat, digestive inflammation, constipation and colitis. Both types treat urinary tract infections (UTI), although in slightly different ways. Whole barely 'tea' is a strong diuretic.

Rye—Rye is also a very warming grain—it can grow in inhospitable terrain, bestowing some of its toughness to us as we eat it. Rye is traditionally very important in northern climates with harsh winters. It's good for adrenal exhaustion and helps restore the delicate balance between the stomach (which can be very acidic or fiery) and spleen-pancreas (which suffers when there is excess stomach fire). Rye contains gluten, but far less than wheat, and it has not undergone as intensive a hybridization process.

The **pseudo-grains**. Botanists call them seeds, but grains are seeds, too, after all. Despite differences, the pseudo-grains are used as grains in our diet and digest as grains. None of the pseudo-grains are glutinous.

Buckwheat—Popular in northern Europe and Asia, buckwheat is a warming grain, like rye, barley and wheat (but without gluten). It is not related to wheat. It has a strong moving or invigorating quality and is used in Chinese medicine dietetics to control blood even as it moves blood. It is used to treat heavy menstrual bleeding, varicose veins, and blood in the stool; in other words, blood that is not staying in its healthy boundaries. It is very good for rebellious qi, offering a distinctly descending energetic. I recommend it for reflux, high blood pressure and constipation. Buckwheat encourages things to break up and let go, therefore it is not advisable for those underweight or trying to return to strength.

Quinoa—Native to the Andean mountains, quinoa grows in cool, high altitude and is a warming grain. It is particularly high in protein. It moistens the stomach and intestines and also treats reflux. Quinoa is good for people with dry lips, mouth ulcers, bad breath due to dehydration, and food stagnation.

Amaranth—Sweeter than quinoa and less warming, amaranth is excellent for morning porridge or ground as flour for baking. Unlike the true grains, amaranth's leaves are a widely used vegetable, cooked like spinach. (And like spinach, the leaves contain oxalic acid and therefore provide iron but no available calcium.)

Teff—Teff is the tiniest round grain imaginable and is native to Africa. It has a rich, nutty flavor and very good nutrition profile: high in all essential amino acids, calcium and iron. In Chinese medicine terms, teff harmonizes liver and spleen, a balance that is easily disrupted by poor diet or stress.

There are other important grains, such as **wild rice**. Contrary to popular opinion, wild rice is in the rice family. It is non-glutinous, good for UTI, hydrating, yet clearing. **Job's tears** (sometimes called Chinese barley but unrelated to barley) is an important diuretic. Try it in soup to balance its drying quality. Job's tears treat edema and clear agitation from stress.

All grains have dozens or even thousands of varieties and cultivars. Here

we are looking in very broad terms at the warnings and especially the benefits of grains in the diet. Each deserves a much more detailed discussion—the benefits of grains for health and cuisine are detailed and varied. Most importantly, however, is that all grains benefit digestion and tune the balances between the digestive organs and the other organ systems in ways that are hard to satisfy with a grain-free diet.

THE QUESTION OF CARBS

Why then do so many people have so much trouble with carbs? Simply put, it's from sugar and overly refined grains. Over time, high sugar and refined food will 'burn out' the capacity of our spleen-pancreas to transform and metabolize carbohydrates. When that happens, any grain may trigger problems; a break from carbs under these circumstances may be helpful. But after 1-3 months, it may be time to reintroduce grains, in simple and well-constructed meals.

SOME RECIPES AND INSTRUCTIONS

Rice

Basic rice cooking intimidates many people needlessly. Well-cooked, rice is not a bland accompaniment but rather a feature of a meal. As my kids learned when very young and enjoy repeating as we begin dinner together, "The first bite of a meal should be the grain to let the spleen know that food is coming!"

For steamed rice, use between one and a half to two measures of water to each measure of rice (proportion depends upon the specific rice, how dry it is, and personal preference), bring to a boil, immediately reduce to the lowest simmer and cover with a well-fitting lid. Do not lift the lid and do not stir the rice. Steam rivulets will form between the grains and at this stage stirring or fluffing will disrupt the steam channels, trapping moisture below and making a mess. After 15-20 minutes for white rice or about 35-40 for brown, turn off the heat but do not disturb the lid. Allow it to coast. As the rice gradually cools, the expansive quality within the pot will begin to reverse and the grains will contract a bit, making a perfect balance of holding-together-stickiness and individual grain integrity. After 5-10 minutes of coasting (during which time your other dishes are completed or quick cooking done), serve the rice and its accompaniments (vegetables, beans, fish, meat, mushrooms, whatever you have prepared) as quickly as possible, to give everyone the pleasure of still steaming food. Simply done and executed well, home cooking can provide a freshness and immediacy of stove-to-table that is impossible for any but the very rarest restaurants.

Congee—(wet rice porridge with condiments) is one of the most important dishes to support digestion, hydration and the health of the stomach itself. Beyond simply a good breakfast food, congee is very important for recovering from illness, for digestion support for the elderly, or for any time we may need some extra support after missing sufficient sleep. To make congee (jook in Cantonese), use good quality medium-grain or long-grain white rice, preferably grown in the style suited to the Asian community. Generally, Asia doesn't export grain, so the best choice is one of several high quality Asian-style rices grown in California, much of which is exported to Japan. Fluffy rice types, sometimes called 'Carolina' style, are not best for congee. Also avoid short-grain, risotto, arborio or sushi rices, they are too sticky.

One cup dry rice makes enough congee for 4-6 people. Eventually the amount of water for 1 cup of white rice is 8-10 cups or more, depending on the type of rice, humidity, and cooking style. Begin by bringing 8-12 cups of water to a boil in a separate pot on the stove burner behind the congee pot. Avoid using chicken or bone stocks for congee. (Plain water is most common, but fish or dried scallop stock is a traditional option, adding a subtle saltiness and the influence of the sea as the source of all life.)

1. Put 1 cup uncooked long-grain white rice in large pot. Turn heat to high, add a tablespoon of good oil (grapeseed, organic peanut, safflower,

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etc.) Use a light oil, but always select oils for appropriate energetic and freshness. Stir so each grain is coated lightly with the oil. Add two generous pinches salt.

2. Then, add just enough boiling water to float the grains, perhaps 1 cup (no need to measure). Stir constantly as the grains absorb the water. When almost dry, add more boiling water; keep stirring. After 3 or 4 gradual additions of water while you are nearly constantly stirring (about 10 minutes), the grains will have given up starch to the water.

3. Once the grains have released starch into the cooking water, you can add a lot more water and finally reduce the flame to a “gentlemanly” low simmer for about 30-45 minutes, now stirring occasionally. Do not allow the grains to settle and stick to the bottom of the pot, but constant stirring is no longer necessary. Add water as needed to get the special congee consistency: milky water between discernible rice grains, very soft cooked.

4. Once done, congee is always served with other things—start simply and elegantly with slivered fresh ginger and sliced scallions, a splash of good soy sauce and toasted sesame oil.

5. Eat with simple condiments (scallion, soy sauce, ginger and toasted sesame oil) or improvise more substantial additions: sliced fish, seafood, nuts, pumpkin/squash, corn niblets, soft-boiled or poached eggs, gently cooked bean sprouts, dried scallops, sliced pork, duck, chicken, cilantro, etc., often utilizing leftovers from the refrigerator or contributions from the freezer. Always consider your intention when selecting ingredients, based on your growing knowledge of food energetics and current health needs.

The world is full of excellent rice dishes, and I recommend being comfortable making pilaf, risotto, paella and stir-fried rice as a start. Many health foodies won't go near white rice, but they miss out on its very useful attributes. Most Asians have a similarly strong aversion to brown rice, but they miss out on its delicious flavor and important health qualities. Working with others it's always important to discern aversions and cultural tastes. If brown rice is rejected, recommend black rice or Himalayan red rice—they're not the same but they are whole rices and compliance will be better.

Corn

Corn is the staple grain of Central and South America. From there it spread to North America. Sweet corn that can be eaten on the cob without further processing was developed by Iroquois farmers in the late 18th century. Corn on the cob is delicious in late summer, but grain corn remains a better choice overall. Find nixtamalized corn if possible, and add dishes like grits, cornbread, tamales, corn tortillas and polenta to your grain rotation.

Polenta—Although traditionally polenta is cooked by slowly feeding the measured dry polenta into swirling boiling water, I prefer to prepare it as I do congee: beginning by dry-toasting the grain in the empty cooking pot, stirring over medium-high heat until nearly toasted, then adding just enough oil to coat each granule, still stirring. Then I carefully add boiled water (from a pot or kettle), stirring with a whisk to avoid clumping. The dry-toasting functions to ‘wake’ the grain after its period of storage (and to develop another layer of flavor). With congee, my preference is grapeseed, sesame or an organic peanut oil; for polenta I prefer butter or olive oil.

The tradition is to stir polenta with wood (cooking is finished when the large wooden spoon or palate stands freely in the thickened polenta), but a whisk works just as well. Polenta is done when it doesn't absorb more water so greedily, or, when the subtle undercooked taste transforms into complex sweetness. Times will vary considerably based on the size of the polenta grind: somewhere between 20 and 45 minutes.

Much is made of the way polenta gelatinizes as it cools, allowing it to be

neatly sliced and further cooked, usually baking or frying. At our home, we will do that with leftover polenta the next day, but the focus is on warm, wet-cooked polenta for breakfast or dinner, served with a splash of olive oil (or butter), a sprinkle of finishing salt and perhaps another spice, depending on health needs and what comprises the rest of the meal. (One favorite is a sprinkle of cracked Grain of Paradise, a spicy seed from the cardamom family, *sha ren* for you herbalists.)

Millet

Millet is perhaps the most important food that very few people eat. A dietary patient recently showed me a scholarly paper claiming that millet is unsafe based on cases of goiter in Africa. This argument is a shameful misuse of science—those people were suffering from socio-economically-induced famine where many were forced to subsist entirely on millet and water for months on end. Zero dietary deficiency or excess problems have been linked to millet as part of balanced eating.

Nonetheless, I often hear from millet newbies that attempts to cook it range from disappointing to disastrous. In previous articles (See for example, *Congee and the Importance of Wet, Cooked Breakfasts* in Published Papers under Resources at www.gfcherbs.com) I've described making millet porridge; here are instructions for flawless steamed millet.

Start by purchasing organic millet at a reputable market. Always rinse millet, using the water-flushing method rather than a strainer: put a measure of millet in a pot, cover with 2-3x as much cool water, slosh around to float any dust from the dry storage, then tip the water over the side, letting gravity hold the millet at the bottom. Try not to lose too many millet grains. Repeat 3-4 times until the water runs clear.

Then, strain the millet to rid excess water. Cook directly with 1.5x as much water as millet, like when cooking rice: start with high heat and bring to boil, then turn heat to very low and cover with well-fitting lid. Cook for 15-20 minutes without lifting the lid or stirring the grain. Turn off heat, leave covered, allow to coast 5-10 minutes. Serve as base of meal with vegetables, protein, lentils, etc.

Dry roasting after washing adds yang qi energy to assist spleen yang ascension, thus supporting all digestion. Once washed and strained, return the millet to the pot, turn heat to high, dry stir millet to dry it, then continue dry roasting until it turns slightly tan and offers a pleasant aroma. Then add a fat such as butter, olive oil or ghee. Coat each grain with the oil. Carefully add water (I use hot water from the tea kettle to move things along, carefully minding spatter), turn heat to low, cook as above: 1.5-2 measures of water to 1 measure of millet, cover on simmer, don't stir, let rest after 15-20 minutes cooking. Serve as base of meal.

Further recipes and differentiation of the crucial benefits of grains will have to wait. I recommend methodically exploring grains and cooking methods, familiar and new. In particular, I urge wheat eaters to explore the antique wheats and wet-cooked dishes such as couscous, tabbouleh and semolina porridges.

Understanding the basics of digestion and the foods that support stomach and spleen-pancreas energetics is a game changer. Rather than something to avoid, consider a treat, or relegate to the ‘cheating department’, skillfully selected and prepared grains support the center of health, forming the basis of well-balanced eating.

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