

HOW TO PROPERLY PREPARE GRAINS, NUTS AND SEEDS

Foreword: Culturing (aka: fermenting), soaking and sprouting foods makes them more digestible, increases the nutritional value (especially the B Vitamins and Vitamin C) and culturing restores healthy pre and probiotics to your gut.

These are simplified versions of making the various soaked, sprouted and cultured foods. You can get fancier versions if desired. The goal here is to get you started. From there you can get as creative as you wish. You will find all recipes have similar principles.

Soaking

In many cultures, modern as well as ancient, beans, legumes (such as lentils), nuts, seeds and grains were all soaked (at very least) or cultured prior to preparing. This increases the availability of nutrients partly by breaking down the phytic acid and enzyme inhibitors found in these foods.



To soak, add the desired amount of beans, legumes, nuts, seeds or grains into a bowl of water with a pinch of salt added (optional: the salt breaks down the phytic acid that can prevent some of the minerals from being absorbed). Soak overnight. For grains, nuts and seeds, this is enough. In the morning, drain the water off, rinse (if desired), pat dry with a paper towel, and use; or store in a container until ready to eat or use. Caution: because the grain, nut or seed was soaked, the enzymes were activated, and it is now a “live” food. As such, it will spoil in about 24 hours. So soak only what you will use for that day. Alternatively, grains, nuts and seeds can be dehydrated (after soaking) and then stored for later use when soaking time is not available.

Beans and legumes need to go longer – 2-3 days. Each day, rinse them in the morning and again at night, and use 2 pinches of salt instead of one, in each soaking.

Sprouting

Sprouting of beans, legumes (such as lentils), nuts, seeds and grains is easy. Use the procedures explained under soaking above. The morning after soaking, drain, rinse and let set in a jar turned on its side. It is important that the jar not be left



without a covering. A tight cover will cause the contents to mold. No cover will cause them to dry out. A screen (made for sprouting), a nylon stocking, or cheese cloth make good covers that prevent drying out, but allow good air flow. You could also buy a tray-style sprouter. Every morning and every evening rinse. If hot weather, 3 rinsing's may be required. Do this every day for 2-4 days. When a bud shows, (beans and legumes), it is sprouted enough for cooking.

If using for sprouts, (i.e. for alfalfa sprouts, mung bean sprouts, lentil sprouts, sunflower sprouts, etc.), continue to sprout until the growth is the desired length. Refrigerate to stop the sprouting. Use on salads, etc.

If using grains for making bread, after soaking or sprouting, dehydrate them in the oven at 140°F until dry. Store in a glass jar until ready to use.

Sourdough

Before the advent of packaged yeast, all bread was soured, or “cultured” (called sour – dough). Sourdough requires a “starter” which is a batter of flour and water that, due to culturing, contains living yeast and beneficial bacteria. If kept properly, sourdough starter can live for centuries!



Starter: Into a glass jar blend a cup of warm water, and a cup of flour, mix, and set in a warm place (70°-80°F). This allows the naturally occurring yeast in the flour to multiply (we want that!). Every day you need to feed it: pour out ½ of the water/flour mixture, and add a fresh water/flour mixture (½ cup warm water and ½ cup flour). Repeat daily. In 3-7 days (depending upon room temperature), the starter will start getting bubbles and get a sour or yeasty smell, or

even puff up. When it develops a bubbly froth, then it is done! It's that simple. Cover it with a lid that has a hole punched in the top for air, and store it in the refrigerator. At this point, you only need to feed it once a week (the same way). If it sits in the fridge for awhile it may get a layer of liquid, sometimes dark, that contains alcohol. Pour it off if the mixture is plenty wet. If the mixture is dry, mix it back in. This is normal.



When ready to bake: Take starter out of the fridge and pour it into a large glass bowl. Add a cup of warm water and a cup of flour to the mixture and stir well. Set in a warm place for several hours until it has a bubbly froth again. The longer it sits the more sour the taste will be. It generally takes 1-2 hours, but can take 6-8 hours.

Put 2 cups of this mixture (called a “sponge” or “starter”) into another bowl, and add 2 Tblsp. olive oil or butter (optional), 4 tsp. sugar and 2 tsp. salt. Mix well. Knead in ½ cup amounts, adding unbleached flour, enough to make a good, flexible bread dough (should take about 3 cups of flour). After kneading, let the dough rise in a warm place, with the dough covered loosely with a towel. Sourdough bread will rise more slowly than regular dough. It needs to double in size and when you poke it with your finger, the hole doesn't bounce back. Then punch down the dough and knead it some more. Put into an oiled loaf pan, cover with a cloth again and let it rise until it doubles in size again.

Take the remaining starter mix, put into another clean jar and add a fresh ½ cup flour and ½ cup warm water, mix and put back in the refrigerator. This is the starter for your next loaf of bread. Bake at 350°F for 30-45 minutes. The loaf is done when the crust is brown and the bottom sounds hollow when tapped. Turn loaf onto a cooling rack and let cool before slicing.

Soured Grain Dishes

Fermentation breaks down the hard to digest components of grains and tends to maximize the nutrients of whatever food is being fermented.

To sour (ferment) grains, add whey and water. When fermenting for the first time, take more of the grain than desired the first time only. From there, you will reserve 1 cup for use as a starter for future grains.

Soured (“Cultured”) Oatmeal: Take desired amount of oats (plus ½ cup extra), place in a glass container and cover with enough water that you can stir it easily, but not enough to make it soupy. To that, add either 2 Tblsp. whey or 2 Tblsp. yogurt or kefir, and stir it in well. Put a thin cloth over the top and let it set at room temperature for 2 days. When done it will smell a little sour and have some bubbles. Remove 1 cup of mixture and either put in a jar and store in the refrigerator for future use, or start another batch of cultured oatmeal. Prepare as you would a normal bowl of oatmeal. It is recommended that you cook it on a low temperature to preserve some of the active enzymes.

Ogi is a traditional West African cereal, or “porridge”, that has been a staple food for centuries. It is also the first food given when babies are weaned. Any grain can be used, but the most popular is millet, corn or sorghum. The whole grain is soaked in water for one to three days. Then it can be strained, if desired, to remove the extra bran. Then it is fermented for another 2-3 days. Cook on low temp and eaten like any hot cereal.