

Organic Oats

Here is another humble ingredient in the kitchen that gets sidetracked due to the more exotic members of its grain family.

Originally an unwanted weed, oats thrived between the rows of wheat and barley and when discovered, was pulled up and burned.

Unbelievably, oats started life as food for horses. Since horses were big eaters, the arrival of oats made the job of feeding them easier; and, because farmers needed horses to help with the work, more oats were sown. So whoever would have thought that oats would later acquire the status of superfood – for humans??

Rolled oats and also oatmeal, the milled grain, are both high in protein, contain essential fats and are rich in minerals including zinc, calcium, magnesium and iron. Vitamin C, found in orange juice for example, assists the absorption of iron, so a bowl of muesli or steaming porridge and a glass of orange juice make an ideal breakfast.

B vitamins, also found in oats, are needed not just for healthy skin, nails and hair but also to nourish nervous systems and to help keep energy levels up - particularly useful for stressed executives or grumpy teenagers.

Oats are also a wonderful source of soluble fibre, essential for ensuring that our digestive systems work efficiently. This is particularly important with constipation becoming increasingly problematic among young children. The soluble fibre also helps to reduce cholesterol levels.

Oats have a very low glycaemic index, which means that they release sugar into the blood very slowly. This can have a positive impact on how we feel and behave and it can improve our concentration levels.



Above all and a not very well known fact is that oats play a key role in the active prevention of diabetes, a condition we are now seeing in growing numbers of young people across the UAE but more so in Dubai. In fact oats have such a remarkable impact on stabilising blood sugar levels that before insulin was discovered, oats were used as one of the few effective treatments for diabetes.

On the nutritional side, as oats take a long time to digest, they are an ideal food for anyone trying to lose weight as they leave you feeling satisfied for longer.

I cook a big pan of creamy porridge most mornings and vary the toppings. A handful of frozen berries are always popular with children as they cool the porridge down slightly and turn it a pale shade of pink or blue. Chopped dried fruits, pureed apple or chopped banana are quick and easy too. You can also add oats to crumble toppings, biscuits and flapjack-style bars, and use them as a coating for oily fish.

Another clever way to feed your family oats if they hate the thought of porridge is to throw in a handful of them into different soups. It thickens the soups, adds texture and makes them more filling. Once added to the soup, you will need to let it all boil and simmer for at least 10 minutes to ensure that the oats are fully cooked.

Recipes

OATMEAL-RAISIN PANCAKES

These pancakes are a great way to ensure your fussy children and spouse get their oats intake at least a couple of times of week.

You can make the pancakes even more attractive by serving them with either Nutella, honey, maple syrup or jam. To give it extra that extra nutritious boost, add sliced bananas, strawberries, blackberries or raspberries as a topping to the any of the above. You can also sprinkle some crushed walnuts or flaked almonds to make

it a superfood loaded breakfast that will keep you going till dinner time!!

Dry ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups oatmeal
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 Tbsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg

Wet ingredients

- 1 egg
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 to 2 cups skimmed milk (to consistency)
- 1/2 cup raisins

Method

Warm a non stick frying pan, spray with oil and ensure it is hot enough before you pour in your pancake batter. In the meantime sift all the dry ingredients together 3 times to ensure there is enough air in the ingredients. This makes the pancakes light and fluffy!!

Separately in a blender, add all the wet ingredients except raisins. Once all blended, the batter will be smooth with absolutely no lumps.

Place the batter in a mixing bowl of an electric beater. Gradually fold in the sifted dry ingredients 1 serving spoon at a time. Ensure it all gets well blended before adding any more dry ingredients mix.

Once you have finished with the dry ingredients mix, and the batter is creamy smooth, add in your raisins and mix on a low speed until the raisins have disappeared deep into the batter.

Oat and lentil Burgers

2 cups lentils, cooked
2 cups mixed cooked vegetables
1 minced onion
1/2 minced medium green pepper
1 large minced garlic clove
1 large shredded carrot
1 cup oatmeal
2 egg whites
2 tablespoons soy sauce
Salt and pepper
Any other spices as desired



Sauté onion, green pepper and garlic in a bit of water or broth. Combine with lentils, veggies and carrot in food processor bowl and use the chopping option. Mix in the rest of the ingredients

Heat a non-stick or sprayed large skillet or griddle. Spoon burger-sized blobs of the mixture onto the hot surface. Flatten slightly. Lower heat to medium, cook till the patty has browned on the bottom. Turn and cook till other side is browned. Please note that you can use any veggies, depending on your taste and preference.

Serve on a toasted rye or regular burger bun with cheese, low fat mayo, lettuce, and tomatoes. Serve with chilli sauce for the grown ups and fries for the kids. Here is a burger treat that the entire family can sit back and enjoy!!

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