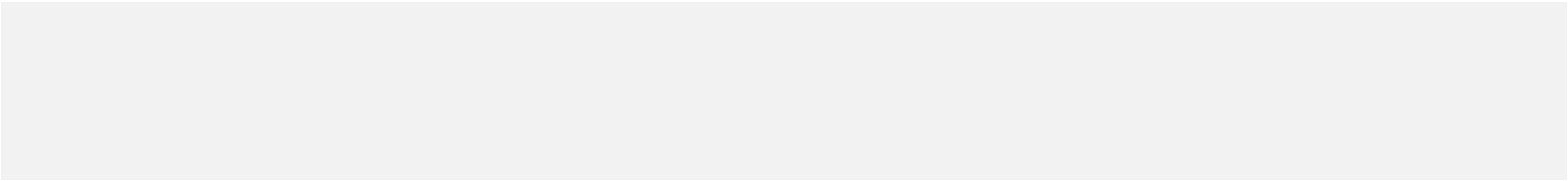


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Top 5 Health Benefits of Buckwheat

Good for gut health? Provides protein? Check and check.

By **[Kristy Del Coro, MS, RDN, LDN](#)** | Published on May 16, 2024

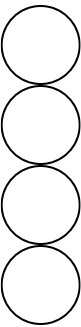




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Despite its name, buckwheat is not actually a type of wheat at all—in fact, buckwheat is not technically even a grain. It is a seed from a flowering plant related to the rhubarb family, likely originating from China approximately 6,000 years ago. Buckwheat is [naturally gluten free](#) and grain free. Yet because of its pyramid-like shaped kernels, nutrition profile, and function in recipes, buckwheat is often treated by chefs and nutritionists as a grain. But buckwheat deserves more recognition than to be grouped with grains—it not only has a singular flavor but also has unique nutritional benefits, is beneficial for our soil, and has been a staple of diets across the world for thousands of years. Used in dishes such as Japanese soba noodles, French crepes from Brittany, Italian pizzoccheri pasta, Kasha Varnishkes, Eastern European porridge, buckwheat is prevalent in many global cuisines. While this isn't a novel ingredient worldwide, it hasn't been a commonly used ingredient in American cooking (outside of use in gluten-free baking). Read on for why you'll want to start adding buckwheat to your shopping list if you're not already.

Types of Buckwheat

In modern cultivation, there are two types of buckwheat grown for food: Common buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) and tartary buckwheat (*Fagopyrum tartaricum*). The main differences are how they breed and their preferred climates for growing, Tartary having a higher tolerance for colder weather and common buckwheat being more widespread in regions with temperate climates.

Health Benefits of Buckwheat

Good for Gut Health

Buckwheat is great for digestive health for a number of reasons. First, as a whole grain, it is a source of both soluble and insoluble fiber, both essential for maintaining [regular digestive health](#). Second, buckwheat has prebiotic benefits, promoting the growth of beneficial gut bacteria, by acting as food for the healthy bacteria. Third, buckwheat is low in FODMAPS, making it a great choice for people with digestive disorders such as IBS. Lastly, there is also [evidence that suggests](#) that pseudocereals such as buckwheat are more satiating than other grains like wheat and rice, meaning they will keep you feeling fuller longer.

Source of High-Quality Protein

Buckwheat is one of the few plant-based protein sources known as a complete protein, meaning it contains all 9 of the essential amino acids needed for health that humans must get from food. One serving of buckwheat (1 cup cooked) provides about 6 grams of protein (the equivalent to the amount of protein in about 1 large egg).

Good for Blood Sugar Balance

In its whole groat form, buckwheat is a source of resistant starch, meaning the starch passes through the small intestine without being digested. Similar to other whole pseudocereal grains that contain resistant starch, this results in a lower spike in blood glucose (lower glycemic index), when compared to refined grain products such as a slice of white bread.

Another benefit unique to buckwheat, is its especially high amount of a soluble carbohydrate called [D-chiro-inositol](#), which [has been shown](#) to help mitigate rises in blood sugar in those with diabetes.

May Promote Heart Health

Buckwheat is the only pseudocereal grain and one of the few foods overall to have high levels of an antioxidant called rutin, which has specific heart health benefits. (Rutin is also found in unpeeled apples, green tea, and figs). Preliminary research shows that rutin, a flavonoid or plant pigment, has anti-inflammatory benefits and may potentially reduce the risk of blood clot formation, improving circulation. Note: if you are prescribed an anticoagulant such as warfarin, talk to your doctor, as rutin may have a potential interaction with the drug.

Allows for Nutrient-Dense Gluten-Free Foods

One of the drawbacks of many gluten-free grain products on the market is that they are either highly refined or naturally low in fiber and vitamins and minerals unless fortified. Naturally gluten-free buckwheat, however, provides an [array of nutrients](#) without any fortification. Buckwheat contains vitamin A, vitamin B complexes, vitamin C, and vitamin E. It also contains important minerals such as zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, manganese, and selenium and is higher in antioxidants compared to wheat and rice. Of the two varieties, tartary buckwheat contains more nutrients overall than common buckwheat, but both are nutritious.

Where Can I Buy Buckwheat?

Look for buckwheat groats in the bulk section of the grocery store or packaged, like this one from [Bob's Red Mill](#) or this kasha made with 100% roasted buckwheat from [Wolff's](#). Buckwheat soba noodles will be in the Japanese food section of the grocery store, but pay close attention to the labels. While all soba noodles are made with buckwheat, some are also made with wheat. The only ones that will be certified gluten-free will be the ones made entirely from buckwheat or a blend of buckwheat and brown rice flour, so take a look at the ingredients and look for a certified gluten-free label if you have celiac disease. If you can't find buckwheat bread in the bakery section, look in the freezer aisle for more options such as this gluten-free sourdough buckwheat bread from [Live Pacha](#).

Buckwheat is also popping up in more and more snack foods. You can incorporate buckwheat into your daily breakfast or as a topping for a smoothie bowl with [Lil Bucks granola](#). Or to include buckwheat in an everyday snack, serve these savory buckwheat crackers by [Better with Buckwheat](#) with your favorite dip, a slice of cheese, or simply on their own. Better with Buckwheat is a woman-founded small business that sources its buckwheat from a multi-generational family-owned farm in Maine and bakes all of their crackers in their own certified gluten-free facility. Karen Getz founded the company in 2014 after she struggled to find a gluten-free cracker that was good enough to pair with her award-winning cheeses made on her organic dairy farm. And for another convenient family-friendly snack, also out of Maine, [Diggables Puffs](#) come in three different mouth-watering flavors: Maine Sea Salt, Garden Herb, and White Cheddar.

Tip

Whole buckwheat groats are best stored in the refrigerator or freezer to extend shelf life and preserve flavor. If storing in a pantry, make sure it is in an airtight container placed in a cool, dry spot.

Related: [Recipe Idea: Celery-and-Apple Salad With Crispy Buckwheat](#)

What Does Buckwheat Taste Like?

Buckwheat has a nutty yet earthy flavor. Raw buckwheat kernels (groats) will be milder than roasted buckwheat (kasha). And unlike most whole grains which must be cooked in a liquid in order to consume, buckwheat kernels can be simply toasted and then consumed as a crunchy snack or topping!

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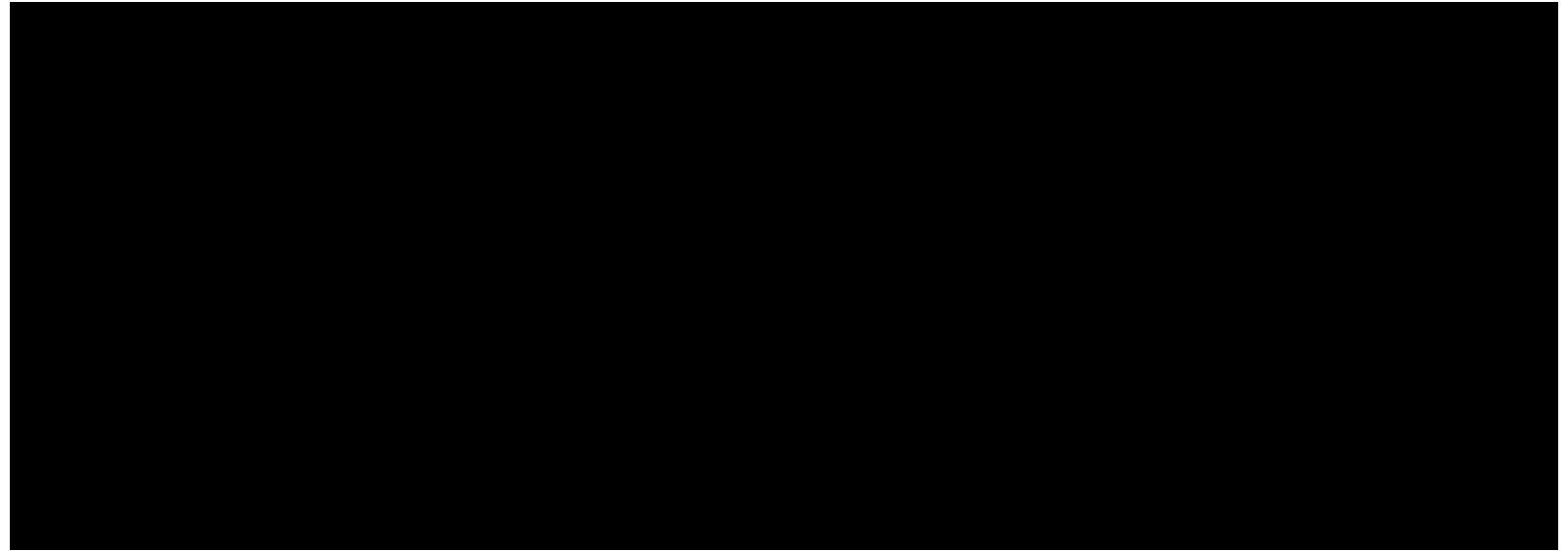


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