



Try Me Days: Farro and Kale

Our last Try Me Friday, on April 28, featured two foods: kale and farro. The students learned about the health benefits of these foods and then had the opportunity to try them at lunchtime. Kale chips and a farro salad were offered for the tasting. The kale chip was a huge hit with 73% approval rating! The farro fared less favorably with about half the students liking it. It was another fun day. Be sure to ask your children what they thought of these foods and look for ways to incorporate them into your family meals to boost their nutrition! Below is some helpful nutrition information about each food and some recipes to try.

Farro

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released in January 2020, **recommend that all adults eat at least half their grains as whole grains**; that's at least 3 to 5 servings of whole grains per day. Children need 2 to 3 servings or more per day. In 2019, on average Americans were consuming 1 serving of whole grains daily.

Whole grains are those that contain the bran, germ and endosperm. Refined grains have been milled to remove the bran and germ which extends their shelf life, but removes their nutrients like B vitamins, iron, and fiber. There are many whole grains including farro.

Farro is Italian for “ancient wheat grain,” and it’s used to describe three distinct grains: einkorn, emmer, and spelt. In North America, farro likely refers to emmer wheat. Emmer wheat is a small, light brown grain with a noticeable bran outer layer. It has a nutty flavor and chewy texture.

Farro is a great source of vitamin B₃ (needed for energy), zinc (for immune system health and function), and magnesium. It is a great source of fiber - comparable to quinoa’s - but is considerably more than brown rice, couscous and pasta. It is also high in protein. A quarter cup has 5g of fiber and 6g of protein.

Farro contains good amounts of antioxidant compounds like polyphenols, carotenoids and selenium. Antioxidants play a vital role in keeping your cells healthy, preventing disease and delaying the onset of aging. Their main function is to neutralize damaging free radicals and help fight against inflammation.

Farro can easily work as a substitute for rice and pasta, in addition to other whole grains like quinoa and buckwheat. It can be a versatile side dish as well as an ingredient in soups or salads. It can even be mixed with fruit as a substitute for granola or muesli.

Research suggests that antioxidant-rich diets can:

- Protect against type 2 diabetes
- Reduce the risk of heart disease
- Delay or slow osteoporosis
- Protect against neurodegenerative disease

Kale

There are up to 21 different varieties of kale, a cruciferous leafy vegetable that can be colored red, blue-green or dark green. Kale is **one of the most nutritious foods in the world** and is one of the highest ranked foods that absorb free radicals which cause damage to the body's cells and cause diseases like cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disease, diabetes, and macular degeneration of the eye.

In 1 cup of kale there is:

- more vitamin C than a whole orange
- calorie to calorie more iron than beef
- **more calcium than a glass of milk**
- a huge boost of vitamin K and magnesium to help with calcium absorption
- a high amount of fiber
- more than 45 antioxidants
- and all essential amino acids, plus 9 non-essential amino acids!

Eating kale is one of the best ways to get **calcium** in your diet; it is much better than supplements. Calcium is absorbed more easily in kale since it also has magnesium and vitamin K which is needed to absorb calcium. Your body needs calcium to build and maintain strong bones. Your heart, muscles, and nerves also need calcium to function properly. Children ages 9-18 should consume 1300mg of calcium each day

Recipes

Kale Chips:

Adopted by: The Everyday Superfood Kale

3 ½ cups kale, stemmed and torn into 2 inch pieces
1 TB olive oil
1 tsp Smoked paprika and ¼ tsp salt
or 1 tsp nutritional yeast and 1 tsp sumac

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F.

Dry kale completely with towels and place into a large bowl.

Drizzle with olive oil.

Using your hands toss the kale with the oil to evenly coat the kale

Season with your choice of spices

Spread on baking sheets lined with parchment paper in a single layer.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, rotating halfway through or until crispy and dry.

Alternatively, cook in the air fryer for about 7-10 minutes.

Be sure to watch the kale closely while baking since they can quickly burn.

Cool for 5 minutes and then serve.

Farro-Kale Salad:

Adopted by: The Everyday Superfood Kale

Dressing:

½ c apple juice
½ c fresh raspberries
3 Tb extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tb honey
1 Tb chopped scallion
1 tsp chopped fresh thyme
Sea salt
Fresh ground pepper

Salad:

2 c cooked farro
½ English cucumber, diced
1 Tb lemon zest
6 cups stemmed and chopped kale
2 c fresh raspberries
½ c crumbled goat cheese
1 scallion, thinly sliced

To make the dressing: in a blender blend the apple juice, raspberries, olive oil, honey, scallions and thyme until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

To make the salad: in a small bowl, toss the farro with half the dressing until evenly coated. Stir in the cucumber and lemon zest.

In a medium bowl toss the kale with the remaining dressing.

Divide the kale into 4 bowls, top with ½ cup of the farro mixture and ½ c raspberries. Garnish with goat cheese and scallions.