Whole Grain Gimmicks

While the Food and Drug Administration has no clear rules that determine which breads can be labeled “whole grain,” the following claims usually appear on whole-grain breads:

- **100% Whole Grain or 100% Whole Wheat.** Unless the manufacturer is lying, the bread contains no refined white flour (which is typically called “enriched wheat flour,” “unbleached wheat flour,” or just “wheat flour”).

- **Whole Grain.** Most contain little or no refined white flour. (If some appears far down on the ingredients list, near the salt or yeast, don’t worry.) We found a few exceptions, though. Arnold (or Brownberry) has a line of Whole Grains bread. Some are all whole grain, but some have refined white flour as the second ingredient (whole-grain flour is first).

The following four claims appear on breads that may or may not be 100% whole grain:

- **Whole Grain White.** When it comes to “whole grain white” breads, anything goes. Some are made from an albino variety of wheat called “white wheat,” rather than the red wheat that’s used to make most breads and other grain foods. The only breads we found with whole-grain white flour as the first ingredient—Arnold’s or Brownberry’s line of Whole Grain Country White—had refined white flour (from red wheat) as the second. In fact, most “whole grain white” breads contain no white wheat; they’re a mix of whole and refined flour from red wheat. Some (like Pepperidge Farm Farmhouse Whole Grain White) have more whole wheat than refined flour, while others (like Oroweat Whole Grain Country White) have more refined than whole wheat flour.

- **12 Grain or Multigrain.** The number of grains is irrelevant. You could have 100 grains. If they’re not whole, who cares?

- **Made with Whole Grain.** The claim almost always means made with some whole grains along with far more refined grains. (Companies often put “made with” in tiny type, hoping no one will notice.) One exception: Weight Watchers Multi-Grain made with Whole Grains is 100% whole grain.

- **Good Source of Whole Grain.** To the industry, the claim means at least 8 grams of whole grain. Grains make up about 60 percent of the weight of bread, so a typical 42-gram slice contains about 24 grams of grain. If 8 of them are whole, the bread is only one-third whole grain. The government has asked bakers to stop using “Good Source” claims, but didn’t insist that they do.

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**Finding the Best Sliced Bread**

BY JAYNE HURLEY & BONNIE LIEBMAN

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f you’ve spent time in the bread aisle lately, you may be confused. Even we’re confused, and we’ve been reading labels since Wonder Bread was building “strong bodies 12 ways.”

Breads used to be “whole wheat” or “white.” Now they can be made with “whole white wheat.” They used to be 100% whole wheat or not. Now you have to divine whether “88% of the recommended daily whole grains” and “3 grams of fiber” beat “22 grams of whole grain” and “40% fiber.”

Wouldn’t it be great if every bread’s label disclosed what percent of its flour was whole grain? (That’s just what Sara Lee has decided to do with its Soft & Smooth Made With Whole Grain White Bread...after we threatened to sue. Turns out the bread is just 30 percent whole grain.)

No matter how you slice it, buying bread is tricky business.
Looking for something sweet for breakfast? Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Swirl Cinnamon or Cinnamon with Raisins bread beats a doughnut, Danish, or muffin hands down.

So does Pepperidge Farm’s line of Breakfast Bread made with Whole Grains, Real Fruit & Yogurt. But the bread is only about half whole grain. And every slice contains less yogurt than you’d get in a sixth of a teaspoon of yogurt. (It’s “a good source of calcium” only because Pepperidge Farm adds it.)

As for fruit, the Blueberry & Grains variety has no more than one or two blueberries per slice. The Apple & Grains and Raisin & Grains have slightly more fruit, but not much.

Grains and Raisin & Grains have slightly more fruit, but more than one or two blueberries per slice. The Apple & Grains and Raisin & Grains have slightly more fruit, but not much.

Here’s a rundown of some of the many claims that are causing label clutter on bread packages.

- **Omega-3s.** “DHA helps support heart, brain & eye health,” says Oroweat Whole Grain 9 Grain bread. There’s decent evidence that DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), one of the key fish oils, may protect your heart, though it’s far too early to know if it can help preserve your memory or vision. Every slice of Oroweat has about as much DHA (18 milligrams) as half a teaspoon of salmon.

  At least Oroweat adds DHA. Some breads that contain flax get all of their omega-3s from the ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) that’s found naturally in flaxseed. There’s little evidence that ALA can protect your heart like DHA does.

- **Heart healthy.** A claim like “heart healthy” means nothing because it needs little or no evidence (since it doesn’t mention a disease). In contrast, “may reduce the risk of heart disease” requires approval from the Food and Drug Administration.

  So far, the FDA has approved a heart disease claim for breads that are at least 51 percent whole grain. But it also allows a heart disease claim on almost any food that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol (and not high in sodium). And that claim can appear on nearly all breads.

- **Reduced sodium.** It’s one of eight claims on the label of Oroweat Whole Grain Active Health bread, but it’s one of the most important. A single slice of most breads contains no more than 250 mg of sodium, but because we eat so much bread, the milligrams add up. Admira- bly, Active Health cuts the sodium down to 140 mg per slice.

  Natural Ovens Bakery, a Midwest baker, goes further. Its breads range from 100 to 130 mg per slice. Bravo!

- **Prebiotic.** “For Digestive Health,” says Oroweat’s Active Health label. Why be precise when you don’t have to? In fact, inulin, the isolated fiber that Oroweat adds to Active Health, may spur the bifidobacteria in your gut to grow. But there’s no evidence that more bifido makes you healthier.

- **No high fructose corn syrup.** HFCS isn’t good for you, but it’s no worse than ordinary sugar or other refined sweeteners. And breads don’t have much of either. You’re worse off with poorly tested acesulfame-potassium, an artificial sweetener that’s added to some breads (like Oroweat Active Health).

- **Light.** Light breads are lower in calories (they have about 50 per slice) than most other breads (about 100 per slice). And nowadays you can find whole-grain versions. Just be prepared to squeeze your sandwich filling onto a smaller, airier slice.

- **Double protein.** “12 g of protein in 2 slices,” says the Brownberry (or Arnold) Whole Grains Double Protein package. The extra protein (mostly from wheat gluten and rice) can move you a little closer to your daily goal—protein (in grams) equal to about half your weight (in pounds), or around 60 grams of protein a day for someone who weighs 125 pounds.

  Shopping tip: many breads that make no protein claim have 10 to 12 grams of protein in two slices.

- **Calcium & vitamin D.** “Calcium for stronger bones and teeth,” says Earth-Grains Double Fiber bread. “Vitamin D to help maximize the absorption of calcium into the body.” True enough.

  Just keep in mind that some calcium-fortified breads have as much as 100 or 150 milligrams per slice. That’s fine if you’re a woman, but there’s some evidence that men who consume more than 1,500 mg of calcium a day have a higher risk of prostate cancer.

  As for vitamin D, the 30 to 80 IU in each slice of bread with added D can nudge you toward the daily target recommended by most researchers (1,000 IU).
Good in Bread

We only looked at whole-grain breads (or breads with a trivial amount of refined white flour) that are sold nationally or are produced by major regional bakers. We didn’t look at store brands or breads sold in health food stores. Best Bites (✔✔) contain no more than 200 milligrams of sodium per slice. Honorable Mentions (✔) can have up to 250 mg. We disqualified breads made with the poorly tested artificial sweetener acesulfame-potassium. Bread is ranked from least to most sodium, then most to least fiber, then least to most calories.

### Bread (1 slice—about 1.5 oz., unless noted)

#### 150 mg of sodium or less

- **Pepperidge Farm Stoneground 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain 100% Whole Wheat Small Slice** (1 oz.)
- **Natural Ovens Bakery Whole Grain Naturals**
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Oatmeal Small Slice** (1 oz.)
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain 15 Grain Small Slice**
- **Natural Ovens Bakery Organic PLUS 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Sara Lee Heart Healthy Classic 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Sara Lee Soft & Smooth 100% Honey Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Oroweat Master’s Best Winter Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Oroweat Whole Grain Active Health**
- **Arnold or Brownberry Stoneground 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Sara Lee Soft & Smooth 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Swirl**
- **Pepperidge Farm Farmhouse Soft 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Home Pride Whole Grains Honey Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Wonder 100% Whole Grain**

#### 160-200 mg of sodium

- **Oroweat Double Fiber**
- **Arnold or Brownberry Natural Flax & Fiber** (1 oz.)
- **Arnold or Brownberry Natural 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Oroweat Whole Grain 9 Grain**
- **Oroweat Whole Grain & Flax**
- **Roman Meal All Natural Muesli**
- **Home Pride Whole Grains 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Double Fiber Soft 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Oroweat Whole Grain Honey Fiber**
- **Pepperidge Farm 100% Natural Honey Flax**
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Oatmeal**
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Soft Honey Oat**
- **Pepperidge Farm Whole Grain Soft Honey Whole Wheat**
- **Wonder Stoneground 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Roman Meal All Natural Multi-Whole Grain**
- **Roman Meal All Natural Whole Grain Sweet Crunch**
- **Roman Meal All Natural Whole Grain Double Fiber**
- **Oroweat Whole Grain & Oat with Corowise**
- **Oroweat Country 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Pepperidge Farm 100% Natural 9 Grain**
- **Pepperidge Farm 100% Natural 100% Whole Wheat**

#### More than 200 mg of sodium

- **Pepperidge Farm 100% Natural German Dark Wheat**
- **Arnold or Brownberry Whole Grain Double Protein Hearty Multigrain**
- **Sara Lee Heart & Delicious—100% Multi-Grain, 100% Whole Wheat, or 100% Whole Wheat with Honey**
- **Nature’s Own All Natural 12-Grain**
- **Arnold or Brownberry Whole Grains 100% Whole Wheat**
- **EarthGrains 100% Natural 7-Grain**
- **EarthGrains 100% Natural 100% Stone Ground Whole Wheat**
- **EarthGrains 100% Natural Wheat Berry with Honey**
- **Baker’s Inn 9 Grain or 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Roman Meal All Natural Superseed**
- **Nature’s Own All Natural—100% Whole Grain or 100% Whole Grain made with Organic Flour**
- **Baker’s Inn Honey Whole Wheat**

#### Light or Low Calorie (1 slice—about ¾ oz., unless noted)

- **Natural Ovens Bakery Weight Sense Right Wheat**
- **Pepperidge Farm Very Thin Soft 100% Whole Wheat** (½ oz.)
- **Weight Watchers 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Weight Watchers Multi-Grain made with Whole Grains**
- **Arnold or Brownberry Bakery Light 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Nature’s Own 100% Whole Grain Wheat Sugar Free**
- **Sara Lee 45 Calories & Delicious—100% Multi-Grain or 100% Whole Wheat with Honey**
- **Dove Light 100% Whole Wheat**
- **Nature’s Own 100% Whole Wheat** (1 oz.)
- **Nature’s Own Wheat ‘n Fiber** (1 oz.)
- **Pepperidge Farm Carb Style**

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