



Brown Bag Ideas with Whole Grain Goodness

SPOKANE, Wash. (September 2008) -- How can you enjoy lunch that's easy on the wallet, provides plenty of whole grain nutrition and keeps your energy up all day long? Brown bag it with barley.

The [National Barley Foods Council](http://www.barleyfoods.org) encourages nine-to-fivers to think outside the box when preparing healthful brown bag lunches.

“For good nutrition on a budget, barley is a hands-down winner,” says Mary Palmer Sullivan, Executive Director of the National Barley Foods Council. “This hardy grain is an excellent source of fiber, cholesterol-free and contributes essential vitamins and minerals for just pennies per serving. It’s a great choice for lunchtime alternatives.”

Barley shines in the kitchen as well. It may be cooked ahead and refrigerated or frozen until ready to use which saves on last-minute prep time. Because cooked barley retains its unique chewy texture, it makes a nutritious and satisfying addition to creative brown bag fare such as marinated whole-meal salads and flavorful fillings for sandwiches and wraps.

For more information on barley nutrition and recipe ideas, visit www.barleyfoods.org.

Barley Walnut Vegetable Salad **(Makes 4 servings)**

3 cups cooked pearl or whole grain barley, see directions below
¾ cup chopped red bell pepper
¾ cup peeled and chopped jicama
¾ cup sliced radishes
½ cup sliced green onions
½ cup crumbled feta cheese
1/3 cup toasted chopped walnuts
1/3 cup prepared low-fat salad dressing

Place salad ingredients in large bowl. Pour dressing over salad and mix gently. Cover and refrigerate. Makes about 4 servings.

Note: For a hardier entrée, add 1 cup chopped and cooked chicken, meat or seafood.

For brown-bag lunch: Place 1 serving of salad in airtight container. Add 1 or 2 teaspoons extra dressing if necessary. Cover and refrigerate until lunchtime.

Per serving (without meat): calories 289, protein 8g, carbohydrates 41g, fat 12g, fiber 6g, cholesterol 18mg, sodium 386mg.

Barley Bean Wraps **(Makes 9 wraps)**

9 whole wheat fat-free tortillas (7-inch)
1 can (16 ounces) fat-free refried beans
3 cups cooked pearl or whole grain barley, see directions below
1 cup prepared thick and chunky salsa
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves
2 canned Jalapeno chiles, sliced (optional)
1-1/4 cups shredded Cheddar cheese

For each wrap, spread about 3 tablespoons refried beans on tortilla. Combine cooked barley and salsa; spread 1/3 cup mixture over beans. Add a few cilantro leaves and several Jalapeno slices. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons shredded cheese. Roll filled tortilla to form a wrap.

For brown-bag lunch: Cover filled and rolled tortilla with plastic wrap and refrigerate. Just before lunch, remove plastic wrap and place filled tortilla, seam-side down, on microwave-safe plate. Cook in microwave oven on HIGH power for 1-2 minutes or until hot. Makes 1 serving.

Per wrap: calories 235, protein 11g, carbohydrates 43g, fat 3g, fiber 8g, cholesterol 4mg, sodium 720mg.

To Cook Barley

In medium saucepan with lid, bring 3 cups water to a boil. Add 1 cup pearl or whole grain (hulled or hullless) barley. Return to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 45-55 minutes or until barley is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Note: If using whole grain barley, it may be necessary to pour off extra liquid that has not been absorbed after cooking. Makes about 3 to 3-1/2 cups. Barley may be cooked ahead and stored for future use. Place cooked barley in an airtight container and refrigerate or freeze until ready to use. For best results, bring refrigerated or frozen cooked barley to room temperature before adding to recipes.

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