



Wheat Foods Council

GRAINS of TRUTH

Wheat Facts

Wheat is a member of the grass family that produces a dry one-seeded fruit commonly called a kernel. More than 17,000 years ago, humans gathered the seeds of plants and ate them. After rubbing off the husks, early people simply chewed the kernels raw, parched or simmered. Wheat originated in the “cradle of civilization” in the Tigris and Euphrates river valley, near what is now Iraq. The Roman goddess, Ceres, who was deemed protector of the grain, gave grains their common name today---“cereal.”

Below you will find some fun facts and little tidbits on wheat and wheat products. We hope you find this sheet informational and useful.

- Wheat was first planted in the United States in 1777 as a hobby crop.
- Wheat is the primary grain used in U.S. grain products- approximately three-quarters of all U.S. grain products are made from wheat flour. (Source: USDA)
- In the year 1850, U.S. per capita wheat flour consumption reached 205 pounds, up from 170 pounds in 1830.
- Wheat is grown in 42 states in the United States.
- Six classes bring order to the thousands of varieties of wheat. They are: Hard Red Winter, Hard Red Spring, Soft Red Winter, Durum, Hard White and Soft White.
- More foods are made with wheat than any other cereal grain.
- U.S. farmers grow nearly 2.4 billion bushels of wheat on 63 million acres of land. (Source: USDA)
- In the United States, one acre of wheat yields an average 37.1 bushels of wheat.
- About half of the wheat grown in the United States is used domestically. (Source: USDA)
- The state of Kansas is the largest wheat producer in the United States with North Dakota a close second.
- Kansas is number one in flour milling in the United States.
- Kansas produces enough wheat each year to bake 36 billion loaves of bread and enough to feed everyone in the world, over six billion people, for about 2 weeks. An acre of Kansas wheat produces enough bread to feed nearly 9,000 people for one day. (Source: Wheat Scoop; 12/30/99)
- One bushel of wheat contains approximately one million individual kernels.
- One bushel of wheat weighs approximately 60 pounds.
- One bushel of wheat yields approximately 42 pounds of white flour.
- One bushel of wheat yields approximately 60 pounds of whole-wheat flour.
- A bushel of wheat yields 42 commercial loaves of white bread (one-and-a-half pound loaves).
- A bushel of wheat makes about 90 one-pound loaves of whole wheat bread.
- There is approximately 16 ounces of flour in a oneand- a-half pound loaf of bread.
- A one-and-a-half pound loaf of commercial bread contains 24 slices.
- Before 1930, bread was sliced the old fashioned way: by hand.
- The first bagel rolled into the world in 1683 when a baker from Vienna Austria was thankful to the King of Poland for saving Austria from Turkish invaders. The baker reshaped the local bread so that it resembled the King’s stirrup. The new bread was called “beugel,” derived from the German word stirrup, “bugel.”
- The traditional bagel is the only bread product that is boiled before it is baked.
- Prepackaged bagels first became available in grocery stores in the 1950’s. (Source: Einstein Brothers History of Bagels)
- In 1960, the frozen bagel made its introduction and consumers had access to bagels even if they didn’t live near a bakery. (Source: Einstein Brothers History of Bagels)
- To revive several-day-old bagels, microwave very briefly (15 seconds), or moisten with water and bake for 10 minutes in a 350° oven or simply toast them.
- Never refrigerate bagels or any bread product. Bread products go stale up to 6 times faster in the refrigerator. Leave at room temperature or freeze.
- A bushel of wheat makes about forty-five 24-ounce boxes of wheat flake cereal.
- The per capita consumption of breakfast cereals in the United States was about 17 pounds in 1997 with about 2.5 of those pounds being hot cereal.
- Thomas Jefferson is credited with bringing the first “maccaroni” machine to America in 1789 when he returned home after serving as ambassador to France.



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- Per capita consumption of pasta in the United States was 22 pounds in 1996 and in 2005 was at 19.52 pounds. (Source: Kalorama Information, New York City Research Group & 2006 Pasta Outlook Report)
- A bushel of wheat makes about 42 pounds of pasta or 210 servings of spaghetti.
- If you eat pasta three times a week, it would take 70 weeks to eat all the pasta made from one bushel of durum. (Source: www.ilovepasta.org)
- Durum wheat is used to make pasta because of its hard nature, which produces a firm cooked product. Semolina is coarsely ground durum with a texture somewhat like sugar. It is the best product for pasta.
- Spaghetti was the number one pasta sold in the United States in 1998 with elbow macaroni coming in second.
- There are more than 600 pasta shapes produced worldwide.
- In 1889, an Italian tavern owner named Don Raffaele Esposito developed a pizza featuring tomatoes, mozzarella cheese and basil – ingredients bearing the colors of the Italian flag. He named it the Margherita Pizza, after the Queen of Italy, Margherita Teresa Giovanni. Thus, modern-day tomato-and-cheese pizza was born.
- Ninety-three percent of Americans eat AT LEAST one pizza per month. (Source: Bolla Wines.)
- Approximately 3 billion pizzas are sold in the United States each year.
- Each man, woman and child in America eats an average of 46 slices, (23 pounds), of pizza per year. (Source: Packaged Facts, New York.)
- Accordingly, to Pizza Today, over 2.7 billion pounds of flour was used to make pizzas in 1996.
- Pizza's inception into the U.S. was 100 years ago in 1905.
- Pepperoni is America's favorite topping, (36% of all pizza orders).
- The graham cracker was named for its inventor, Sylvester Graham, a 19th-century American clergyman and nutrition advocate.▪ The early crackers, or "biscuits" as the English called them, were handmade, hard-baked products made from flour and a little moisture. The low level of moisture, decreased even further with baking, left no medium for molds to grow. Made with little fat, rancidity was not a concern.
- A soda cracker barrel was the method of marketing as long as cracker production was localized. At the turn of the century, Adolphus Green laid the foundation for the modern cracker baking system that is used today.
- Crackers main ingredient is unbleached flour from soft red or soft white wheat.
- The number one cracker sold in a 52-week period ending in January 2003 was Ritz Crackers. (Source: Information Resources, Inc.)
- Ancient traditional tortillas were made from ground corn by Mexican natives as long as 2000 years ago. Flour tortillas only started to become popular in the 19th century.
- In the U.S. in 2000, there were 85 billion tortillas consumed, not including tortilla chips. (Source: TIA)
- According to tortilla manufacturers, nearly 60 percent of their products are consumed by non-Latinos.
- Thirty-seven percent of consumers choose Cherry as their all time favorite fruit pie. (Source: Bakery Production & Marketing, 1998)
- Oreo cookies were introduced in 1912 and are listed as the most popular cookie today.
- Girl Scout cookies – Thin Mints are the third most popular cookie sold in the U.S. (Source: ABC Bakers)

