

Your Health

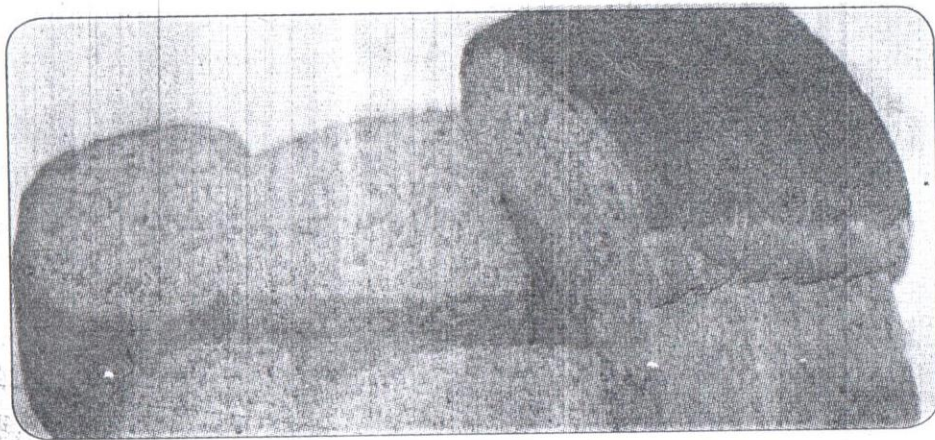
More good than you know in a grain of wheat

"Man hu (what is it?)," asked a group of people on first seeing bread. This was the food supplied miraculously to the Israelites during their journey through the desert. Called "bread from heaven," it appeared as sweet round seeds in the morning dew. Gathered before the heat of the sun, the seeds were ground and then baked in cakes or boiled. They were made as whole grain bread.

The traditional bread is the "stuff of life". It supplies many essential nutrients. It is an excellent source of B-vitamins, calcium, complex carbohydrates and minerals. The proteins in wheat are very nutritious.

Whole grains provide digestible carbohydrates (50 per cent), indigestible carbohydrates (cellulose fibre), protein (10 per cent), vitamins especially B complex, minerals (such as phosphorus, magnesium, iron, calcium, zinc and selenium) and phytochemical elements which act as antioxidants. They are however deficient in vitamin A, C, and B12.

Whole grain bread is deficient in amino acid lysine, which is important for children's healthy bone, cartilage and muscle development. Lysine is available in milk and legumes. By combining milk, bread and



GOOD LIVING

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fruits for breakfast you obtain all the ingredients for "good living."

When dough is left in the open air for some days, it becomes slowly "colonized" by wild bacteria and microscopic yeasts living in the air. They rapidly develop in the dough creating some sour taste. A small portion of this is capable of leavening other loaves. These

bacteria pre-digest the starch and protein, releasing more vitamins and transforming carbohydrates into lactic acid, which improves taste and facilitates the action of enzyme phytase. This inactivates phytates, allowing greater mineral absorption in the intestines.

Chapati is unleavened bread. It takes longer to digest. When made from whole grain flour, it has all the nutrients. These nutritious forms of bread adapted from the Far East would release the true nutrient value of wheat. A study conducted at Harvard Uni-

versity demonstrated the more whole grain products eaten, the lower the risk of non-insulin dependent diabetes. This is because glucose in whole grain is released slowly and does not produce abrupt increases in blood glucose levels.

Eating whole grain bread for breakfast is not only healthy, it acts as an intestinal broom that sweeps the digestive tract. It produces a greater sense of satiety (fullness) due to fibre, helping reduce additional food intake and thus preventing obesity. Besides, it helps prevent constipation by increasing fecal volume and acceleration of fecal passage through intestines, thus eliminating toxic intestinal substances like bile acids. The absence of cholesterol in bread makes it healthy for the heart and reduces the risk of high blood pressure.

In today's world, we need not ask for "mana," the English version of "Man hu," for the Creator supplies all our needs in the grains. Africa, the home of sorghum and millet needs to produce them in sufficient quantities if we are to nutritiously feed ourselves. It is time we learned to make home-baked bread.

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