

Oats facts and stats



Did you know..?

- Oats are known as *Avena sativa* in Latin
- Some of the oldest known oats were found in Egyptian tombs dating to the 12th Dynasty, around 4000 years ago, but were probably weeds rather than cultivated crops.*
- The oldest known cultivated oats were found in caves in Switzerland, dating to the Bronze age, around 3000 years ago.*
- Porridge should traditionally be stirred with the right hand, clockwise, with a wooden stick, known as a spurtle or a theevil.
- The largest recorded bowl of porridge was cooked at Edinburgh's Farmers Market on Saturday 15th September 2007 – it weighed 81kg.
- Oats were first established as a key crop in Scotland during the 13th Century.
- Families of manual workers in Scotland used to cook large amounts of porridge at a time, allow it to go cold in a 'porridge drawer', then slice it and take it to work.
- Porridge is known as brochan in the Highlands of Scotland, and milgruel in Shetland.
- Samuel Johnson (1709-1791) defined oats in his dictionary as "Eaten by people in Scotland, but fit only for horses in England." To which his companion and biographer, the Scotsman James Boswell retorted "That's why England has such good horses and Scotland has such fine men!"*
- Oatmeal once had value as a currency in the payment for rent or wages
- Oatcakes are widely considered to be the national bread of Scotland, and have held that position for many centuries. They were even baked by the Romans in Scotland**

How many....?

- 131,000 *** hectares of oats are grown in Great Britain – more than the area of Berkshire
- Of these:
 - o 22,000 hectares are grown in the South West
 - o 21,000 hectares are grown in the South East and London
 - o 19,000 hectares are grown in the West Midlands
 - o 13,000 hectares are grown in the East Midlands
 - o 10,000 hectares are grown in the East of England
- Oat production in the UK for 2008 is estimated at 752,000 tonnes, up 6 percent compared with the previous 12 months***
- Oat product sales rose by 4 percent during the 52 weeks up to 16.11.08, compared to the previous year ****
- Forty-three percent of UK households purchased at least one oat product during the year ****

Why oats are so good...

- Oats are a good source of B vitamins, particularly thiamin, riboflavin, B6 and folate, as well as vitamin E.
- Oats are low in sodium and a good plant source of iron and potassium.
- Oats have an approved Health Claim by the Joint Health Claims Initiative which states: “The inclusion of oats can help reduce cholesterol as part of a diet low in saturated fat and a healthy lifestyle”.
- Oats are a wholegrain food. The Joint Health Claims Initiative has approved the following statement: “People with a healthy heart tend to eat more wholegrain foods as part of a healthy lifestyle”.
- Oats are low GI foods. They can therefore help to control blood glucose levels by reducing post-meal rises in blood glucose levels and providing a steady release of energy.
- Depending on the recipe, oatcakes traditionally contain 78.4 percent wholegrain – meaning you would need to consume approximately 2 oatcakes to consume a 16g serving of wholegrain¹.

¹ It is recommended that consumers eat the equivalent of three 16g servings of wholegrain a day

For further information, images and recipes visit www.allaboutoats.com or contact:

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* www.oatmealofalford.com

**www.nairns-oatcakes.com

****DEFRA Annual UK Cereal Supply and Demand estimates

**** dunnhumby market research for 52 weeks ending 16th November 2008

Editors Notes:

So what are oats?

- **Pinhead oats** (sometimes referred to as coarse oatmeal or steel cut oats) are made from passing whole oat grains through steel cutters which chop each one into four pieces. They can be used for baking oatcakes.
- **Rolled oats** Jumbo rolled oats are made by steaming the whole grain and then passing through rollers to flatten them out. They can be eaten raw in muesli, or used to make a coarse porridge. Regular rolled oats are made by putting pinhead oats through a similar process. They cook more quickly than normal oats and make a finer or smoother porridge. They can also be used in oat biscuits, oatcakes and flapjacks.
- **Oatmeal** is oats ground to produce 'flour' of various grades from the coarsest which is also known as pinhead, used in porridge, to superfine oatmeal. Medium oatmeal can be used in biscuits, scones and crumble toppings, while fine oatmeal is the main ingredient in oatcakes.
- The 'All About Oats' campaign has been set up by the Scottish Oats Group in collaboration with HGCA (formerly Home-Grown Cereals Authority) and Scotland Food & Drink
- The Scottish Oats Group is a group of organisations with an interest in the Scottish oat sector. Its members include: Grampian Oat, Quaker Oats, John Hogarth, Paterson Arran, Nairn's Oatcakes, Spoff, Oatmeal of Alford, Cordon Farm, Tilquhillie Puddings, SCRI, SAOS, Scottish Development International and Scottish Enterprise

- Scotland Food & Drink is the industry-led organisation which aims to grow the value of Scotland's food and drink sector, make it more profitable and deliver greater global success in a fiercely competitive market. Its mission is to grow the industry from £7.5bn to £10bn by 2017 and its vision is to build Scotland's international reputation as '*A Land of Food and Drink*'
- HGCA aims to improve the production and marketing of UK grain. It provides market information to UK cereal farmers and producers, assists cereal product development, promotes exports and funds research and development.
- The UK Joint Health Claims Initiative approved the following statement: "People with a healthy heart tend to eat more wholegrain foods as part of a healthy lifestyle". The Joint Health Claims Initiative (JHCI) was the UK predecessor to the role of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), who has now assumed responsibility for assessment of health claims as part of the new EU claims Regulation on foods. JHCI offered pre-market advice and a Code of Practice for the food industry, enforcers and consumers and ensured that health claims on foods were both scientifically truthful and legally acceptable.
- Oats are a wholegrain food. The Joint Health Claims Initiative approved the following statement for wholegrain foods. "People with a healthy heart tend to eat more wholegrain foods as part of a healthy lifestyle".