

Rye

Wheat products reign supreme on the shelves of UK supermarkets; almost all bread and bakery goods, breakfast cereals and pasta are made from wheat. Best known for crispbreads and dark, brick-like loaves, rye is a largely underused grain in the UK.

Rye is a cereal crop grown in colder parts of Northern and Central Europe and Russia – 94% of the world's rye is grown in Europe. It is mainly used for animal feeds, but it is also milled into flour to make breads and crispbreads and is used in alcohol production. Only 28% of the world's rye crop is used for human consumption.

Rye bread is a staple in Germany, Scandinavian countries and Russia, rather like the humble white or brown loaf is in the UK.

The dough produced by rye flour is less elastic than wheat dough, as a result the baked bread tends to be more dense and compact than the breads we are traditionally used to – this is usually referred to as dark rye bread. Rye flour can be mixed with wheat flour to aid the baking process, and produces a lighter loaf, both in texture and colour.

Traditional German Pumpernickel bread, made from rye flour, takes 16 – 24 hours to bake in a low temperature steam-filled oven. It emerges with a deep rich colour, sweet dark chocolate coffee flavour and an earthy aroma. Top with smoked salmon for a perfect starter.

Rye flakes are also available from health food shops. They look a lot like rolled oats and can be used in a similar way – to make porridge and for use in baking, in place of oats.

Rye bread has virtually the same nutrient profile as wholemeal bread. 2 slices of rye bread gives us:

110 calories
4g protein
2g fat
4g fibre
80mg calcium (11% of an adults daily requirement)
3mg iron (20% of a woman's and 35% of a man's daily requirement)

Rye bread is also a useful source of B vitamins and vitamin E.

Breads made from rye flour – rye and pumpernickel breads have a low glycaemic load, meaning they are digested and absorbed more slowly from the stomach, making you feel fuller for longer. Eating more low GL foods can help people with diabetes to manage their blood sugar levels and help people who are dieting to avoid hunger pangs and snacking.

Eating more wholegrain foods like rye bread and crispbreads, as part of a healthy balanced diet, can help to manage body weight effectively and help to reduce the risk of developing heart disease, stroke and some cancers (especially bowel cancer).

Rye contains gluten and is therefore not suitable for people with coeliac disease who have to follow a gluten-free diet.