

## Whole Grain Synergy Brings Success

### AACC International Partners with the Whole Grains Council

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In 2008 the Whole Grain Stamp will appear on more than three quarters of a billion food packages, helping consumers quickly and easily find whole grain products. And, thanks in part to AACC International's Whole Grains Task Force, some of those millions and millions of packages will contain sprouted grains.

The Whole Grain Stamp, a creation of the Whole Grains Council (WGC) and its parent organization Oldways, was introduced in January 2005, one week after the 2005 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* first recommended that all Americans make at least half their grains whole. The stamp first appeared on products falling under the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s realm in February 2005, but it wasn't until August 2006 that it was approved by the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) for use on whole grain foods containing meat and poultry, such as a pepperoni pizza or a chicken pot pie with whole grain crust.

The stamp now appears on more than 1,600 products, with more than 180 food companies—including eight based in Canada and six based in Europe—supporting this industry standard. (A list of products using the stamp can be seen at [www.WholeGrainsCouncil.org/find-whole-grains/stamped-products](http://www.WholeGrainsCouncil.org/find-whole-grains/stamped-products).)

As popular as the Whole Grain Stamp is, it hit a small snag in early December 2007 when a pizza company asked USDA/FSIS for permission to include the stamp on a garlic chicken parmesan pizza with a "six sprouted grain" crust. While products falling under FDA guidelines do not require pre-approval of packaging wording and graphics, those regulated by FSIS must pass such a review. And in this case, FSIS's preliminary ruling was that the product could not claim whole grain content because sprouted grains are more akin to vegetables than to whole grains.

Sprouted grain products are generally created by soaking grain kernels until germination occurs and a small sprout just barely extrudes from the kernel. The sprouted grains are then ground up, creating a doughy mix that can be used in bread doughs or, as in this case, combined with salt and seasonings and pressed into a pizza pan.

Sprouted grains are growing in popularity, with their proponents claiming that sprouting creates a more easily digestible form of grain with increased bioavailability of key nutrients. Research comparing sprouted and nonsprouted grains is scarce,

however, and FSIS had few resources to turn to in order to resolve the question.

At this point, the WGC partnered with AACC Intl.'s Whole Grain Task Force, prompting Julie Jones, the task force's chair, to immediately appoint a subcommittee to study the issue and provide clarification and guidance to FSIS. Coincidentally, a similar question had just been raised by manufacturers in the UK, where products made through the sprouting process described above are labeled "malted grain" products. Michele Sadler, nutrition manager for British food organization IGD, joined the subcommittee to provide international perspective.

The subcommittee reviewed both U.S. and UK nutrient values for sprouted and unsprouted wheat and found that the nutrients were comparable, before and after sprouting. The group also observed that the major change that occurs when grains are sprouted is that some of the starches turn to sugars, but that "analytical enzymatic changes" occur during fermentation of grains in the traditional drawn-out production of sourdough breads. Thus, calories, protein, etc. should not be affected.



Courtesy Oldways and the Whole Grains Council, [wholegrainscouncil.org](http://wholegrainscouncil.org)

Because sprouted/malted whole grain appears to have similar nutritional value to other forms of whole grain and because any changes are similar to those occurring in widely accepted fermentation processes, the subcommittee asked the task force at large to consider the following statement:

"Malted or sprouted grains containing all of the original bran, germ and endosperm shall be considered whole grains as long as sprout growth does not exceed kernel length and nutrient values have not diminished. These grains should be labeled as malted or sprouted whole grain."

When the vote on the statement was tallied, support was unanimous. The WGC reported AACC Intl.'s determination to

<sup>1</sup> The Whole Grains Council, Boston, MA.

USDA/FSIS officials, along with supporting data, and FSIS was able to revise its earlier ruling. FSIS now allows sprouted grains to be considered as whole grains as long as they comply with AACC Intl.'s definition. The amount of whole grain claimed on any packaging will be the adjusted dry weight of the grain, after subtracting any excess water added by the sprouting process.

This successful joint project between AACC Intl. and the WGC is part of an ongoing partnership between the two organizations. The synergy between the two is logical: AACC Intl. has deep resources on the scientific side, while the WGC excels in translating the science of nutrition into effective consumer programs that support better health.

In fact, the first project undertaken by the WGC after its founding in 2003 was the creation of a consumer-friendly definition of whole grains. Rather than reinvent the wheel, the WGC started with AACC Intl.'s carefully-crafted definition, rewording it only slightly to remove technical terms like "carapace" that consumers would not be able to understand.

AACC Intl.'s Whole Grain Task Force includes more than 30 members in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The group holds lively conference calls almost every month to address the latest regulatory and consumer issues in an effort to support the huge increase in whole grain product introductions and consumer interest over the past three years. Contact Julie Jones, chair of the task force, if you would like to bring any whole grain issues before the group.

**Cynthia Harriman** is director of Food & Nutrition Strategies for Oldways and the Whole Grains Council and a member of AACC Intl.'s Whole Grain Task Force. For more information about the Whole Grains Council, visit [WholeGrainsCouncil.org](http://WholeGrainsCouncil.org).



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