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Healthiest Breads: Sourdough Bread vs. White Bread vs. Whole Wheat Bread vs. Whole Grain Bread

By Rikki Hoffman, RDN, CDN

Bread is a big part of our diets in America. From white bread, to sourdough bread, to whole grain breads, there are endless options. Some breads are healthier than others, let's learn more about the healthiest bread options.

Healthy bread: what makes a bread unhealthy or healthy?

What makes a bread healthy or unhealthy is the ingredients used in the bread, which determine the nutritional benefit of the bread. For instance, a bread made with whole grains with little or no added sugar, saturated fat, or sodium can be part of a healthy balanced diet. Whole grain breads with this ingredient profile will contain essential nutrients and may contribute to lowering cholesterol as well as lowering the risk of certain cancers - a healthy bread for sure! On the other hand, standard white bread without any whole grains and with added refined sugars will not have the health benefits common in whole grain breads and is considered to be an unhealthy bread.



What is the difference between sourdough bread vs. white bread vs. whole wheat bread vs. whole grain bread?

Sourdough bread is made with a fermented grain starter. Traditionally, the starter is made with flour and water, and is left to ferment for a few days. The natural yeast and lactic acid bacteria found in the flour ferment and change the chemical makeup of the mixture. In commercial baking, baker's yeast can be added, and this speeds up the fermentation process. The starter is then used as an ingredient in the sourdough bread. Sourdough bread can be made with whole grain flour or with white flour.

White bread and whole grain breads, including whole wheat bread, are made with flour, water, and yeast, but without any fermentation. White bread is made using white, or refined, flour which is stripped of a lot of its nutrients during processing. Some vitamins and minerals are added back in after processing, but white bread often lacks protein and fiber. Whole grain bread is made using whole grain flours such as wheat, oat, or bran and often contains more nutrients than white bread.

What is the healthiest bread for you: sourdough bread vs. white bread vs. whole wheat bread vs. whole grain bread?

The healthiest bread for you is 100% whole grain bread, with minimal sodium, saturated fat, and little to no added sugar. This could be whole wheat bread or whole grain sourdough bread. Whole grain breads provide essential nutrients that are lacking in white bread. Depending on how long the fermentation process was, 100% whole grain sourdough bread may even be healthier than regular whole grain bread, because the sourdough fermentation can affect the nutritional profile, making some vitamins and minerals more available for our bodies to absorb. At Wildgrain, our **whole grain sourdough bread** (made with organic wheat flour and without added sugar) is one of our most popular artisan breads.



Is sourdough bread healthier than regular white bread?

When the long fermentation process is used, sourdough bread may be healthier than regular white bread. A long fermentation creates additional nutrients in sourdough bread that are not present in non-fermented bread, like regular white bread. The long fermentation period of some sourdough breads may also alter the starch content of the bread, making sourdough bread more easily digestible for people with a gluten sensitivity. In addition, sourdough bread is healthier than regular white bread because sourdough does not typically include added refined sugar while regular white bread does contain added refined sugar.

Which bread is best for diabetics? Is sourdough bread healthy for diabetics?

The best bread for diabetics is bread that is lower in carbs and higher in fiber. Normally, carbs and sugars in bread will increase a diabetic's blood sugar, but when fiber is eaten with the carbohydrates, the blood sugar does not rise as high or as fast. Fiber is found in breads that are made with whole grains or other high-fiber foods such as seeds and nuts, or foods that are fortified with fiber. To make sure your bread is made with mostly whole grains, look for "whole" in the first ingredient (or the second ingredient after water). Added sugars in a bread will add to the carbohydrate count and raise a diabetic's blood sugar, so breads without added sugars (including high fructose corn syrup, honey, agave, maple syrup, fruit juices, and other sweeteners) are healthier for diabetics.

Sourdough bread may be healthy for diabetics depending on how it is processed. There is some research that suggests that long-fermented breads (as opposed to breads that are made with baker's yeast as a shortcut) do not raise blood sugar as high as other breads. If the main flour used is a whole grain, or if other high-fiber ingredients are added to the bread, that would be even better for a diabetic. The fermenting process involved in making sourdough bread may increase the availability of fiber in the bread as well. At Wildgrain, we make our sourdough loaf with whole grain and wild yeast.



Which bread is best for weight loss? Is sourdough bread good for weight loss?

The best bread for weight loss is bread that is made from 100% whole grain, contains little or no added sugar, and little or no added saturated fats (found in butter, cheese, lard, shortening, coconut oil, palm oil, and hydrogenated oils). Whole grain bread will provide fiber, which is filling and helps keep you full for longer. Added sugar and added fats will contribute extra calories without contributing significant nutrition, so the best bread for weight loss will not include excess sugar or saturated fats. If the sourdough bread meets these requirements, sourdough bread can be part of a healthy diet for weight loss. At Wildgrain, we make our sourdough loaf without any added sugars.

Which bread is best for cholesterol? Is sourdough bread good for cholesterol?

Again, the answer is fiber! Fiber, specifically soluble fiber, can help lower bad cholesterol and therefore any bread - including sourdough - that contains a good amount of soluble fiber can help to lower cholesterol. Whole grains contain soluble fiber, so breads made with 100% whole grain flours are the best for cholesterol. If other cholesterol-lowering foods such as nuts or oats are added to these breads, that is even better for lowering cholesterol. At Wildgrain, we make our sourdough loaf with organic whole wheat flour to provide additional fiber.

When shopping for bread, it is important to find one that will be a part of a healthy diet. There may be additional benefits to sourdough bread, but the main thing to look for is whole grains and minimal sodium, added sugar, and saturated fat.

Looking for healthy breads? Try Wildgrain

Interested in trying healthy breads made with wheat flours and no added sugar? Wildgrain is the first bake-from-frozen delivery subscription service



for breads, pastries, and fresh pastas. Some of our more popular breads include [Whole Wheat Sourdough Loaf](#) and [Sourdough 7-Grain Loaf](#). Learn more about [Wildgrain](#) and our artisanal baking methods.

About the Author

Rikki Hoffman, RDN, CDN has been a registered dietitian for ten years, working primarily with patients who have kidney disease. She also has a private practice which focuses on helping clients achieve lifestyle and weight loss goals. She graduated with a Bachelor's in Dietetics from Rutgers University and did her Dietetic Internship at Montclair State University.

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