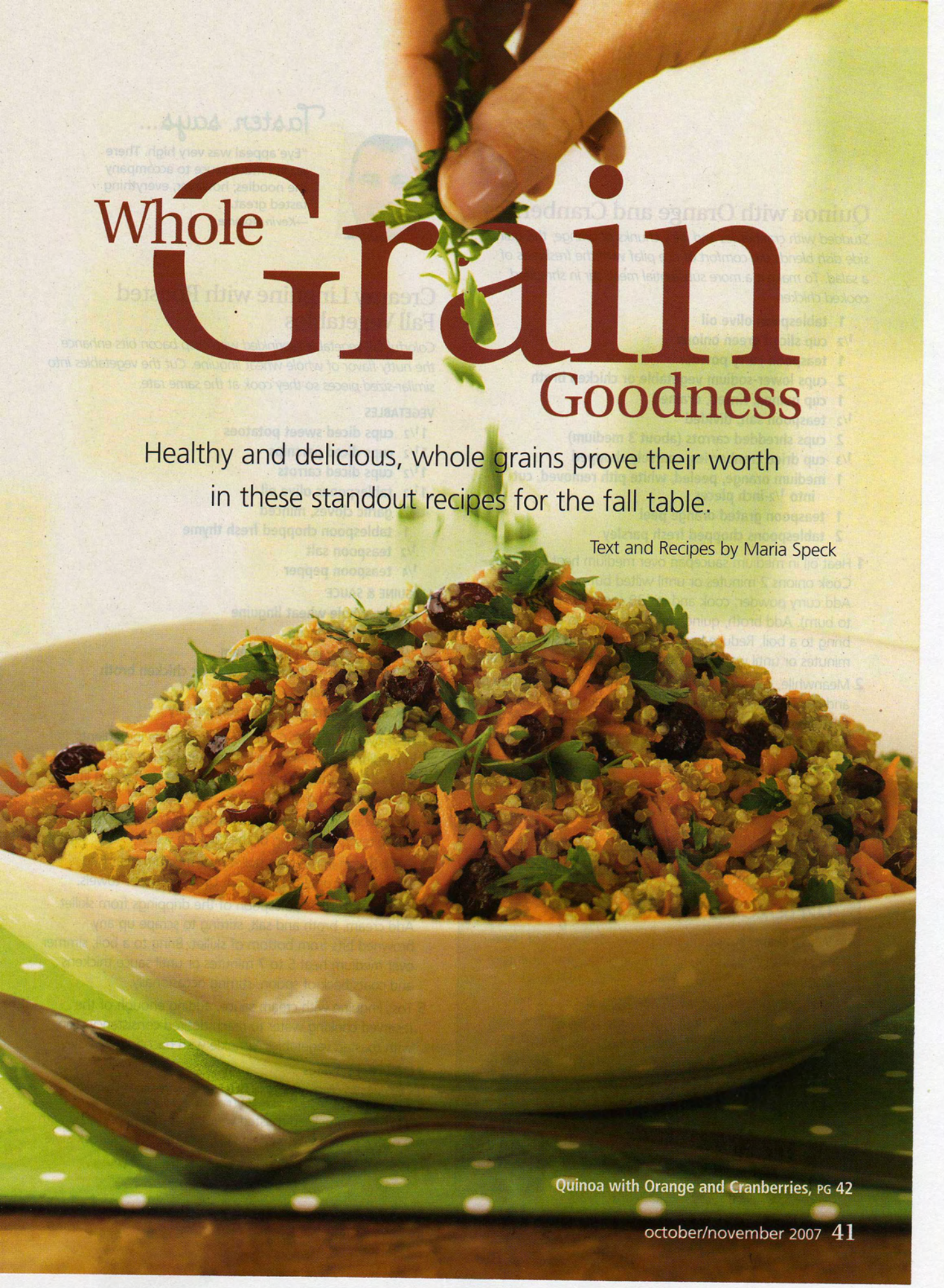
Whole Grain Goodness

Healthy and delicious, whole grains prove their worth in these standout recipes for the fall table.

Text and Recipes by Maria Speck



Quinoa with Orange and Cranberries, PG 42

Quinoa with Orange and Cranberries

Studded with cranberries and juicy chunks of orange, this quinoa side dish blends the comfort of rice pilaf with the freshness of a salad. To make it a more substantial meal, stir in shredded cooked chicken.

- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1/2 cup sliced green onions**
- **1 teaspoon curry powder**
- **2 cups lower-sodium vegetable or chicken broth**
- **1 cup quinoa, rinsed, drained**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt, divided**
- **2 cups shredded carrots (about 3 medium)**
- **1/3 cup dried cranberries, coarsely chopped**
- **1 medium orange, peeled, white pith removed, cut into 1/2-inch pieces**
- **1 teaspoon grated orange peel**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**

1 Heat oil in medium saucepan over medium heat until hot. Cook onions 2 minutes or until wilted but not browned. Add curry powder; cook and stir 30 seconds (be careful not to burn). Add broth, quinoa and 1/4 teaspoon of the salt; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 15 minutes or until water is absorbed and quinoa is translucent.

2 Meanwhile, combine carrots, cranberries, orange, orange peel and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt in medium bowl. Carefully stir mixture into quinoa; cover and let stand 3 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley.

6 (1-cup) servings

PER SERVING: 180 calories, 4 g total fat (.5 g saturated fat), 4.5 g protein, 33 g carbohydrate, 0 mg cholesterol, 320 mg sodium, 4 g fiber

whole and healthy

Whole grains are nutritional powerhouses, full of beneficial minerals, vitamins, phytochemicals, antioxidants and fiber. A grain is considered "whole" when it contains the precious germ and bran (the outer skin). These components are rich with iron, magnesium, zinc, vitamin E and various B vitamins. Over the years, numerous studies have demonstrated that a diet rich in whole grains reduces the risk for different cancers, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity.

Processed grains, such as white rice or white pasta, don't have the germ and bran. They're removed to give these products a longer shelf life.

Taster says...

"Eye appeal was very high. There wasn't much sauce to accompany the noodles; however, everything tasted great."
—Kevin Fromme

Creamy Linguine with Roasted Fall Vegetables

Colorful fall vegetables sprinkled with crisp bacon bits enhance the nutty flavor of whole wheat linguine. Cut the vegetables into similar-sized pieces so they cook at the same rate.

VEGETABLES

- **1 1/2 cups diced sweet potatoes**
- **1 1/2 cups diced parsnips**
- **1 1/2 cups diced carrots**
- **1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

LINGUINE & SAUCE

- **8 oz. whole wheat linguine**
- **2/3 cup diced bacon**
- **3/4 cup heavy whipping cream**
- **1/2 cup lower-sodium vegetable or chicken broth**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley**

1 Heat oven to 425°F. Combine all vegetable ingredients in medium bowl. Arrange on rimmed baking sheet; bake 20 to 25 minutes or until vegetables are tender and lightly browned, turning once.

2 Meanwhile, cook linguine according to package directions. Drain, reserving 1/3 cup of the cooking water.

3 Cook bacon in medium skillet over medium heat 6 to 8 minutes or until almost crisp. Drain on paper towels.

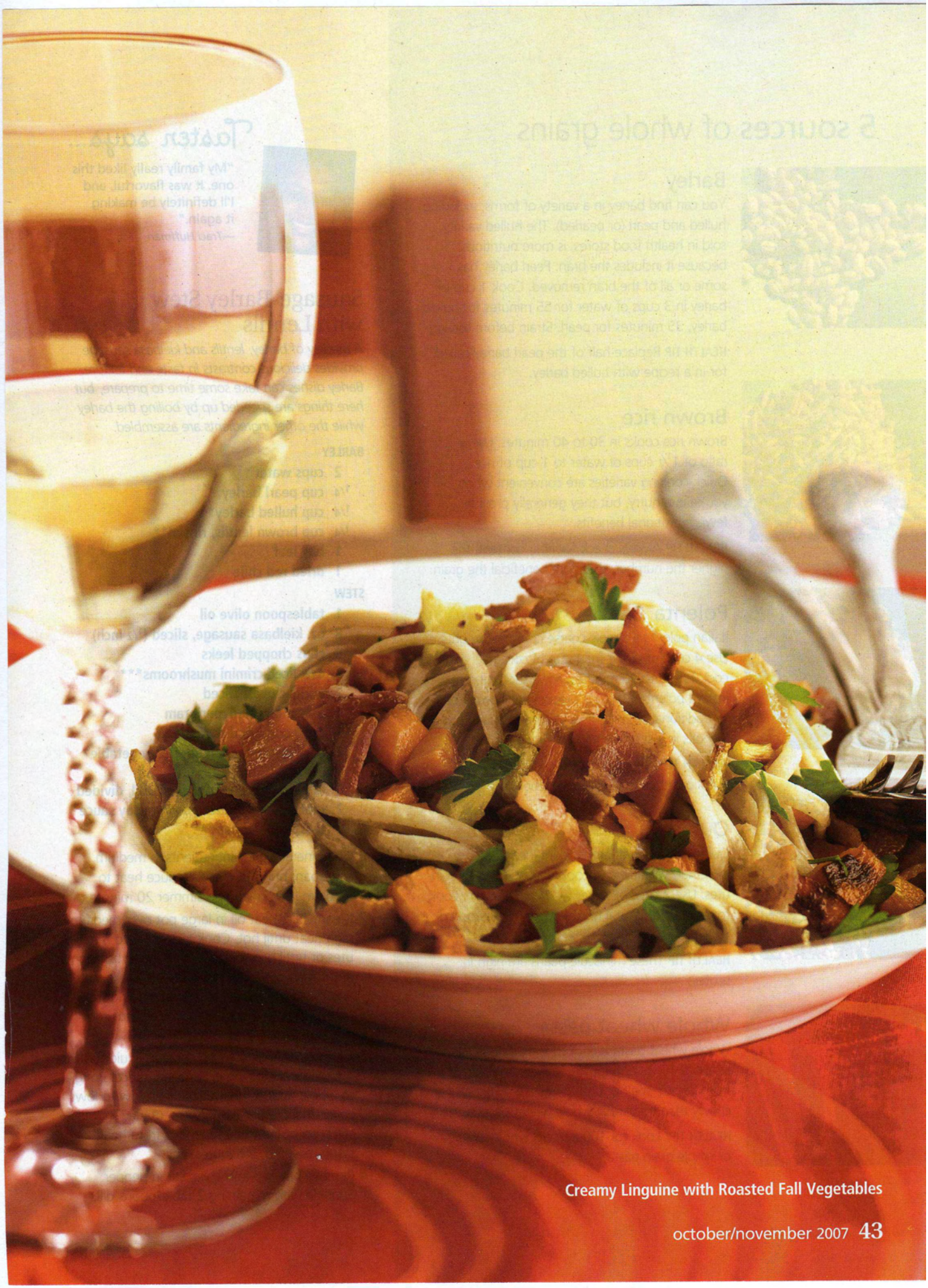
4 Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the drippings from skillet. Add cream, broth and salt, stirring to scrape up any browned bits from bottom of skillet. Bring to a boil; simmer over medium heat 5 to 7 minutes or until sauce thickens and coats back of spoon, stirring occasionally.

5 Toss linguine with cream sauce, adding enough of the reserved cooking water to reach desired consistency. Top with roasted vegetables; sprinkle with bacon and parsley.

4 (1 3/4-cup) servings

PER SERVING: 525 calories, 25.5 g total fat (11.5 g saturated fat), 13 g protein, 66 g carbohydrate, 60 mg cholesterol, 1010 mg sodium, 9.5 g fiber

BEER The caramelized roasted vegetables match perfectly with the malty Spaten Oktoberfest ($9/6) or the Doppel Bock-style Spaten Optimator ($9/6).



Creamy Linguine with Roasted Fall Vegetables

5 sources of whole grains

Barley

You can find barley in a variety of forms, including hulled and pearl (or pearled). The hulled variety, sold in health food stores, is more nutritious because it includes the bran. Pearl barley has some or all of the bran removed. Cook 1 cup of barley in 3 cups of water for 55 minutes for hulled barley, 35 minutes for pearl. Strain before serving.

HEALTH TIP Replace half of the pearl barley called for in a recipe with hulled barley.

Brown rice

Brown rice cooks in 30 to 40 minutes. Use a ratio of 1½ cups of water to 1 cup of rice. Quick-cooking varieties are convenient when you're in a hurry, but they generally provide fewer nutritional benefits.

HEALTH TIP Always check for fiber content; the higher the number, the more beneficial the grain.

Polenta

Italian polenta is simply coarse cornmeal or grits. Use 4 cups of water for 1 cup of cornmeal and cook for 20 to 30 minutes. For a shortcut, use instant polenta, which is precooked. Compared to traditional polenta, it lacks some texture, but it cooks in just a few minutes.

HEALTH TIP Coarse grits and cornmeal are more nutritious than finer milled varieties.

Quinoa

Quinoa (KEEN-wah), an ancient Inca staple, is extremely versatile and cooks in just 10 to 15 minutes. Use 2 cups of water for 1 cup of grain. Look for quinoa in natural food stores or well-stocked supermarkets.

HEALTH TIP These miniscule pearls are high in protein.

Whole wheat pasta

Whole wheat pasta is cooked like white pasta, in about 10 to 12 minutes. Newer varieties made from kamut, spelt or brown rice are a little less chewy than traditional whole wheat pasta.

HEALTH TIP Look for 100 percent whole wheat or whole grain pasta.

Tasters says...

"My family really liked this one. It was flavorful, and I'll definitely be making it again."
—Traci Huffman

Sausage-Barley Stew with Lentils

A medley of barley, lentils and kielbasa sausage provides delicious contrasts in taste and texture. Barley dishes can take some time to prepare, but here things are speeded up by boiling the barley while the other ingredients are assembled.

BARLEY

- **2 cups water**
- **1/4 cup pearl barley**
- **1/4 cup hulled barley***
- **1/4 cup brown lentils, rinsed****
- **1 bay leaf**
- **1 dried red chile**

STEW

- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **8 oz. kielbasa sausage, sliced (1/2 inch)**
- **3 cups chopped leeks**
- **8 oz. sliced crimini mushrooms*****
- **2 garlic cloves, sliced**
- **1 teaspoon dried marjoram**
- **1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **2 cups lower-sodium beef or vegetable broth**
- **6 tablespoons chopped fresh dill, divided**
- **2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce**
- **1/4 teaspoon pepper**

1. Combine all barley ingredients in medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in large pot over medium-high heat until hot. Cook kielbasa 3 to 5 minutes or until browned. Stir in leeks, mushrooms and garlic; cook 3 minutes or until leeks soften and mushrooms start to brown, stirring frequently. Stir in marjoram and oregano; cook 1 minute.
3. Stir in barley mixture and cooking liquid, broth, 4 tablespoons of the dill and soy sauce. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low to low; cover and simmer 35 minutes. (Barley should still have a slight bite.) Remove from heat; let stand, covered, 3 minutes.
4. Remove bay leaf and chile; stir in pepper. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons dill.

TIPS *Pearl barley can be substituted. Cooking time will need to be reduced in Step 3 to 20 to 25 minutes.
**You also can use dark green French lentils, also known as Puy lentils, which have a delicate flavor and firmer texture.
***Crimini mushrooms look like brown button mushrooms and are often labeled as baby portobello mushrooms.

4 (1 1/4-cup) servings

PER SERVING: 405 calories, 20.5 g total fat (6.5 g saturated fat), 16.5 g protein, 41.5 g carbohydrate, 35 mg cholesterol, 1335 mg sodium, 8 g fiber

WINE Serve this stew with a burly, hearty red: the 2005 Osborne Solaz Tempranillo-Cabernet Sauvignon Tierra de Castilla from Spain ($10) or the 2004 Altano Red Wine from Portugal's Douro Valley ($10).

Lamb Pilaf with Raisins and Pine Nuts

Although the deep, rich flavor of this dish needs no embellishment, you can dress it up with a dollop of Mint-Cucumber Yogurt if you like. Don't let the long ingredient list discourage you. Once the spices are assembled and the pilaf is simmering, it hardly needs any attention. Add 1/4 cup dried cranberries for a tangy twist.

PILAF

- **3 cups lukewarm water**
- **1 1/2 teaspoons plus 3/4 teaspoon salt, divided**
- **1 1/2 cups brown rice**
- **2 tablespoons olive oil**
- **3/4 lb. boneless lamb leg or shoulder, cubed (3/4 inch)**
- **1 large onion, chopped**
- **3 garlic cloves, sliced**
- **2 1/2 cups lower-sodium beef or vegetable broth**
- **1/3 cup raisins**
- **1/3 cup pine nuts**
- **1/2 cup water, if needed**
- **2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill**
- **Mint-Cucumber Yogurt, if desired (recipe follows)**

SPICE MIXTURE

- **2 teaspoons curry powder**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper**
- **Dash ground cloves**

1. Combine water and 1 1/2 teaspoons of the salt in medium bowl. Stir in rice; let stand 15 minutes. Drain.
2. Combine all spice mixture ingredients in small bowl.
3. Heat oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat until hot. Cook lamb 3 to 5 minutes or until browned on all sides. Add onion; cook 5 minutes or until softened, stirring frequently. Stir in garlic and spice mixture; cook and stir 1 minute (be careful not to burn spices).
4. Stir in rice to completely coat with spice mixture. Add broth and remaining 3/4 teaspoon salt; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 30 to 40 minutes or until rice is almost tender. Stir in raisins and pine nuts. Add 1/2 cup water if rice is dry. Cook 10 minutes or until rice is tender. Remove from heat; let stand, covered, 3 minutes. Sprinkle with dill; serve with Mint-Cucumber Yogurt.

4 (1 1/2-cup) servings

PER SERVING: 660 calories, 25.5 g total fat (5 g saturated fat), 33 g protein, 77 g carbohydrate, 60 mg cholesterol, 660 mg sodium, 10 g fiber

WINE Purchase a juicy Australian Shiraz, such as the 2005 Rosemount Diamond Label ($10). Or try the 2004 Curtis Santa Barbara County Heritage Cuvée ($18), a California Rhône-style blend.

Mint-Cucumber Yogurt

This refreshing yogurt complements the layered flavors of the pilaf.

- **1 cup low-fat plain yogurt**
- **1 small garlic clove, minced**
- **1 teaspoon olive oil**
- **1/2 teaspoon dried mint or 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint**
- **1/2 cup diced cucumber**

Whisk yogurt, garlic, oil and mint in medium bowl. Stir in cucumber.

1 1/4 cups

Polenta with Spinach and Parmesan

Green flecks of tender spinach contrast with strands of nutty Parmesan in this rich, creamy polenta. Serve it as a light main dish or as an accompaniment to sautéed chicken breasts. Use a long-handled wooden spoon when stirring polenta because the mixture tends to bubble up and can burn.

- **2 cups water**
- **2 cups lower-sodium vegetable broth**
- **1/2 teaspoon salt**
- **1 cup polenta or cornmeal**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 garlic clove, minced**
- **4 cups packed chopped baby spinach**
- **3/4 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, divided**
- **2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- **1/2 teaspoon pepper**

1. Combine water, broth and salt in medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat; remove from heat. Whisk in polenta in a thin stream; return to heat. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium-low to low; cover and simmer 25 to 30 minutes or until thick, stirring frequently.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in medium skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add garlic; cook 30 seconds or until fragrant. Add spinach; cook 1 minute or until wilted. Drain, pressing gently to remove excess liquid.
3. Stir spinach mixture into polenta. Stir in 1/2 cup of the cheese, butter and pepper; sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup cheese.

6 (3/4-cup) servings

PER SERVING: 205 calories, 10 g total fat (5 g saturated fat), 7.5 g protein, 20.5 g carbohydrate, 20 mg cholesterol, 530 mg sodium, 1.5 g fiber ●

Maria Speck is a Boston-based food writer and cooking instructor specializing in whole grains.