

Culinary Literacy Corner: Flavorful Farro

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Culinary medicine is an evidence-based field in medicine that blends the art and science of food and cooking with the science and art of medicine. As health care professionals, when we incorporate healthy eating practices in our daily lives for ourselves and your families, these practices reflect onto our patients. In addition to advising patients to ‘eat more fiber’ or ‘choose healthy oils and proteins’, when we discuss coronary disease or diabetes, we can provide specific tips and recipes for indulgent dishes that are practical and feasible. Critics may say that not all patients have the means to buy certain ingredients; some may lack the time and the skills to prepare meals at home. However, the principles we enthusiastically convey to patients will resonate with and help them follow a path towards healthier eating and living.

In this piece, we revisit concepts of planning, repurposing, and freezing. Today’s recipe has a formula – grain, herbs, vinaigrette – that is relatively simple to assemble but requires some planning in terms of cooking the grain (can be done ahead of time) and chopping the herbs. A forgiving aspect of cooking (unlike baking) is that measurements don’t need to be precise. Add more or less herbs and seasonings to make it your own.

Farro is an ancient form of wheat used in Italy. It has an earthy, nutty, slightly sweet taste, and it is a great source of fiber and protein. Like other grains, farro is versatile; it can be used in salads, soups, as a side or as a main meal.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup uncooked farro
- ¼ cup packed mint, chopped
- ¼ cup packed basil, chopped
- 2 TBSP olive oil
- 1 TBSP lime (acid)
- 1/2 TBSP honey
- Pinch paprika
- Salt & pepper to taste



Directions:

To prepare the farro, rinse the grain, then add to a pot with 2-3 cups of water (follow instructions on package; less water is needed if you’re using a rice cooker), and cook for about 30-40 minutes. Set aside to cool. If you want to prepare ahead of time, farro stores in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. While boiling the farro, chop the herbs and set aside. In a small bowl, whisk the olive oil, lime and honey. Toss the farro, herbs and vinaigrette. Add paprika, salt and pepper and your dish is ready to eat! You may add some legumes (e.g. chickpeas, black bean) or animal protein and make it a meal. Save some for lunch the next day.

By doubling the amount of farro, you can put some cooked plain aside for later in the week to add in a soup, or store in the freezer (labeled). When I shared these photos with my daughter, she replied - you mean not everyone freezes food for later? If you do, send me photos of your freezer 😊

