

Bulgur Wheat with Cherries, Almonds & Green Beans - A Formula Meal

Catherine Brown, Plant-based Chef & Culinary Nutritionist at [A Seat at My Table](#)



Are you familiar with formula meals yet? The basic concept is to work with a few whole ingredients - seasonal produce, proteins, healthy fats, herbs and spices that can be mixed and matched in any number of ways. I've found planning meals this way to be ingenious because it:

saves time

allows flexibility

requires no recipe

boosts kitchen confidence

fosters creativity

reduces food waste

packs in plenty of quality nutrients

This meal is both the result of this process, and my desire to experiment with combining sweet with savory. If that's not your jam, no worries! That's the beauty of the formula. You choose:

what you enjoy eating

what's in season

what's available

what fits your budget

Here's how it works. You choose a whole grain, some veggies (cooked, raw or a combination), additional protein, dressing, seasonings and/or herbs. The formula that works well is:

1 part cooked whole grain

2 parts veggies

1 part additional protein

1/8 - 1/4 part dressing

seasonings and/or herbs to taste

Here are some ideas:

Whole grains (cooked) ~

black, brown burgundy or wild rice

wheat bulgur

cracked wheat

kamut

quinoa

faro

hulled barley

spelt berries

soft wheat berries

oat groats

rye groats

buckwheat

whole wheat couscous

whole wheat small shell pasta

whole wheat orzo

Veggies ~ (raw, steamed, roasted, grilled, lightly sautéed or a combination of any of these)

cucumbers

tomatoes

summer squash

winter squash

peas (shelling, sugar snap or snow)

beets

spinach

kale or chard

onions

carrots

eggplant

cabbage

broccoli (broccolini or broccoli raab)

cauliflower

fennel

sweet potatoes

corn

peppers (sweet, hot, or both!)

Additional protein (yes, plants DO have protein!) ~

Beans: cannellini, kidney, garbanzo, navy, black, adzuki, edamame, yellow-eyed, Jacob's cattle, green or black lentils

Tofu: extra-firm, cubed

Tempeh: smoked or regular

Nuts and Seeds: (these also add healthy fats) sliced almonds, walnuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios, filberts, Brazil nuts, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds (pepitas), sunflower seeds, peanuts (not a true nut, but a legume)

Dressing ~

I like to keep it simple and use a fresh vinaigrette. If you have some left-over vinaigrette, fantastic! Use it here, just keep in mind any herbs/spices already in the vinaigrette when adding additional fresh herbs. The basic vinaigrette ratio is 1 part vinegar to 3 parts extra virgin olive oil. Then season with a touch of salt and pepper. If you prefer LESS acid, use citrus juice instead of (or in addition to) vinegar. You can also add a touch of honey or maple syrup to balance the acidity.

Seasonings ~

Seasonings can either be added directly to the vinaigrette or added to the dish separately. Use fresh herbs whenever available, just keep in mind you will need more fresh herbs than dried. You can also use dried ground spices. Think about what you enjoy eating (and smelling!) and don't be afraid to experiment... just start with a small amount, taste and adjust.

Here are some fresh herbs to consider:

dill

thyme (have you tried lemon thyme yet?!)

basil (so many varieties available now!)

chives

summer savory

French tarragon

scallions or bunching onions

sage

mint

cilantro

fennel fronds

rosemary

lovage or celery leaves

edible flowers (nasturtium, pansy, borage, bachelor buttons, calendula, etc). For a great list of edible flowers and their flavor profiles, check out [THIS POST](#) (about 3/4 of the way down)!

Other ideas ~

Avocado, diced - keep in mind it may oxidize quickly

Olives, any kind

Marinated artichokes

Fermented veggies

Dried fruit: chopped dates, apricots, prunes, figs, pineapple, cranberries, raisins, cherries

Fresh (or grilled fruit): apples, pears, peaches, pineapple, nectarines, plums

The idea is to experiment and see what you like. Once combined, three to four days is usually the maximum time a formula meal like this will stay fresh. If you're preparing a meal for those with discerning palates, you can easily keep each part separate and serve "build-your-own" style. Any leftovers make excellent lunches!

This one pictured contains the following:

- wheat bulgur
- small red kidney beans

- fresh green beans, sautéed
- fresh Bing cherries
- caramelized onions, diced
- sliced almonds, toasted
- fresh herbs: chives, basil and French tarragon
- Dijon mustard vinaigrette

So if I want to end up with 4 servings (2 cups each), let's take a quick look at that formula again:

1 part cooked whole grain

2 parts veggies

1 part additional protein

1/8 - 1/4 part dressing

seasonings and/or herbs to taste

These are the quantities I used to make this one: [2 cups = 1 part]

2 cups cooked bulgur wheat

2.5 cups green beans (sautéed)

1 cup fresh cherries

1/2 cup caramelized onions

4 cups total (the individual amounts can be anything you like)

1.5 cups small kidney beans

1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted

6 - 8 Tbsp dressing

2 Tbsp fresh French tarragon

Toss together and you're DONE! Easily scaled up or down.

Nutrition Facts

Servings: 4

Amount per serving

Calories **334**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 11.3g **14%**

Saturated Fat 0.5g **2%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 402mg **17%**

Total Carbohydrate 51.1g **19%**

Dietary Fiber 12.5g **45%**

Total Sugars 7.1g

Protein 11.3g

Vitamin D 0mcg 0%

Calcium 75mg 6%

Iron 4mg 22%

Potassium 515mg 11%

**The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a food serving contributes to a daily diet. [2,000 calorie a day](#) is used for general nutrition advice.*

Recipe analyzed by **verywell**

Nutrition information is for a 2 cup serving using the formula above (6 Tbsp vinaigrette).