



# GREENS+GRAINS

Recipes for Deliciously Healthful Meals



MOLLY WATSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSEPH DE LEO





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*To remember every moment of positive influence, every supportive comment that wormed its way into my brain, and every skill learned or idea garnered that made this book possible is a Herculean task beyond my abilities. A few, however, stand out so obviously that it's easy to name them.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Greens and grains have slowly but steadily taken over my kitchen.

In spring it's tangled masses of pea greens, intense stinging nettles, and tender but bitter dandelion greens. Next, peppery watercress and wild arugula, lemony sorrel, spongy buoyant spinach, and nutty fava leaves show up. Then come pliant grape leaves, piles of brilliantly green Swiss chard with bright white stems, and bunches of fresh leaves with beets or turnips still attached to the stalks. Hearty kales and collard greens (not to mention the usually discarded but deliciously edible leaves of broccoli and kohlrabi) see me through most of the winter.

Where bags and jars of long-grain rice and rolled oats used to stand, the shelves are now full of bulgur and barley, farro and quinoa, buckwheat groats and wild rice. The sheer variety of brown rice—short grain, sweet, medium, jasmine—taking up the cupboard can seem absurd, but I turn to each of them often and for different effects.

Everyone may not be as greens-mad and grains-obsessed as I am, but once you get used to the range of flavors and textures they add to meals, it's tough to turn back. While I'm a fan of most vegetables and all the leafy green things I can think of, this book focuses specifically on greens like spinach and chard and kale that can be cooked. Similarly, I zero in on whole grains that are truly whole, not ground into flour. There are a few exceptions to that rule, but only because a dish was so darn tasty that I couldn't resist (when you whip up the Buckwheat Galettes on page 106, I think you'll agree).

Then, I bring them together. Every recipe contains greens and whole grains. From a light salad of fluffy quinoa and peppery arugula (see page 32) to a cozy braised dinner of chicken, farro, and kale with winter squash (see page 113), these recipes cover every meal and every course except dessert. (See "Greens and Grains for Breakfast" on page 87 if you don't believe me.)

I don't eat a ton of meat, but I'm far from a vegetarian. These recipes reflect that. I use a bit of pancetta here and some broth there; those ingredients are always optional. There are a few seafood meals and a chicken dinner, some ground lamb or turkey. This is all simply how I like to cook. Many of the recipes just happen to be dairy free or vegan or gluten free. None of those are rubrics that I follow or think about much, but if you do, you'll find dishes to cook from these pages.

Not that long ago, it would have been difficult to imagine a book filled with recipes using kale and spelt that wasn't a health book. For some people, I suppose such a thing is still tricky to understand. Yet where so many regard hearty greens and whole grains with an eye toward their role in a healthful diet, I see them first and foremost as delicious.





COLLARD GREENS

ARUGULA

FAVA GREENS





WATERCRESS

PEA GREENS

DINO KALE

CURLY KALE

BROCCOLI RAAB

SPINACH

# GREENS

Greens are leaves, plain and simple.

I am no botanist. Nor am I an avid or even successful gardener. When I'm cooking—and eating—I care mostly about how a green tastes and how it can be cooked and am not all that concerned about its family or genus. I consider how strong its bitter edge is, from the bright spiciness of mustard greens to the intense slap of collard greens. I think of the texture, from soft and tender pea greens to stiff and tough kale. Then I account for how cooking either brings out its bitterness (spinach) or tames it (dandelion greens).

Once I've weighed all these factors, I go ahead and use greens interchangeably, simply adjusting cooking times and seasonings along the way. I encourage you to do the same.

There are more than a dozen greens listed here, organized from delicate to hearty and grouped by those that can substitute for each other. Most grocery stores, however, limit their stock to a half dozen. Fresh herbs, arugula, spinach, chard, kale, and collard greens are fairly easy to find in most locales. Mustard greens, watercress, escarole, and turnip greens may also be regulars, depending on regional preferences. Large supermarket chains are unlikely, though, to carry fava greens, purslane, or fresh grape leaves. For now, such items are still intensely seasonal and

need to be sought out at farm stands, natural foods co-ops, and specialty stores.

Luckily, they are, at heart, all green leaves. Every recipe in this book will work using parsley for an herb, spinach for quick-cooking greens, or kale for longer-cooking greens.

## SPINACH

Spinach is the gateway green. Widely available and widely cooked, it's the first green most people have eaten in a cooked form instead of tossed in a salad. While I'm all for people eating cooked greens, spinach, so mild and mellow when raw, develops a slightly bitter, even metallic or tannic, edge when cooked. This edge, as creamed spinach aficionados can attest, can be dulled with fat, most particularly butter, cream, or cheese.

The baby spinach sold in salad bins or plastic containers should be used as a salad ingredient—trying to cook them is an exercise in frustration since heat melts them down to nothing and you end up with a slippery green puddle from even the biggest pile of leaves. Such tender leaves do work nicely in soups, however, where the heat of the broth can wilt them as it's ladled into the bowl.

Older, bigger leaves and heirloom varieties like the chef's darling Bloomsdale spinach, however,

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have thick leaves with deep grooves that can stand up to a bit of heat without completely disappearing.

#### ARUGULA AND WATERCRESS

One of the best developments in supermarket produce departments in my lifetime is the widespread availability of arugula. Watercress at specialty markets is a nice touch, too. Most people toss both in salads, and that is a fine and noble thing, but their peppery flavor works in many cooked dishes, as well. Like spinach, arugula and watercress cook quickly and wilt down into a shadow of their raw selves. I use this to my advantage in soups, where the hot broth cooks them in the serving bowl, and at other times that I want greens to wilt down in a jiffy.

#### STINGING NETTLES

Nettles prove that a weed is only a weed if you don't want it growing where it is. Stinging nettles tend to be aggressive plants when they find damp locations in the temperate areas where they can thrive. Luckily, they are uniquely flavorful, with a deep green flavor that makes nettles taste like they're good for you, as if spring leapt into each bite. Tame them with a dunk in boiling salted water. While they're still raw, avoid their eponymous sting by wearing long sleeves and gloves, or just put plastic bags

on your hands when you handle them. At farm stands and markets they're often sold in garbage bags to keep everyone sting-free.

Like spinach, nettles cook down to a fraction of their original volume. Since they take up so much room when raw and sting when you touch them, I tend to cook them down right when I bring them home and then store them, cooked, for up to two days before using. Or I pop blanched nettles (see "How to Blanch Greens" on page 14) in a resealable plastic bag, push out as much air from the bag as possible, and freeze them. I then have up to six months to use them.

#### PEA GREENS

These young shoots and fine tendrils from pea plants are sold in towered tangled masses. They cook down quickly and have a delicate flavor that is easily overshadowed if cooked with too much seasoning. Keep things simple with a bit of oil and small amounts of aromatics like onions, garlic, or ginger to make sure the soft pea-like flavor can shine.

#### FAVA GREENS

Fava greens have a wonderfully nutty flavor and cook up much like spinach or nettles—quickly. Favas are in the family of "nitrogen fixers," plants that put nitrogen back into the soil, working as natural

fertilizers. Lots of farmers plant fava beans to fix nitrogen in the soil before planting the "real" crop on that plot, with no intention of letting the plants come to maturity or harvesting the fat pods. Some will bring the leaves to markets or sell them to specialty stores. Savvy cooks who have trouble finding them let farmers know they're interested in buying the small, pointed leaves of the plants.

#### GREEN HERBS

I love using big bushy bunches of herbs as if they were any other green. They pack more distinctive and decidedly less bitter flavors than your average green, but they also toss up and cook down like the tender leaves they are. You'll see parsley, sorrel, cilantro, and mint cast to play the role of "greens" in many of these recipes.

#### PURSLANE

Part green, part herb, purslane has spongy little leaves that have a wonderful slipperiness hidden in their crunch. Like parsley and cilantro, the tender part of the stem is edible, too. Purslane is tricky to find, even at markets where forage stands (those selling wild mushrooms) are as likely to sell it as farmers, since it grows quite happily in the wild as well as being cultivated. Try it in salads or cooked quickly, like spinach.



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## ESCAROLE

Often used as a salad green, escarole is a chicory, closely related to Belgian endive and radicchio. It provides crunch when used raw or a hearty texture when cooked, but without the fibrous effect of denser, darker greens. If escarole isn't available, frisée, sometimes sold as curly escarole, or Belgian endive can both be a bit more bitter, but work well in place of escarole in these recipes.

## DANDELION GREENS

Yes, dandelion greens are similar to the leaves of the weeds you tackle in your lawn. However, the bunches of greens at markets are a variety grown specifically for their big, flavorful leaves. Those that grow in yards and gardens are, indeed, edible, as long as those areas aren't treated with chemicals. Dandelion greens pack more than the average amount of what many eaters experience as bitterness in every bite. I call on that flavor and try to harness it to good effect, often pairing these greens with acid (lemon, tomatoes, vinegar) and fat (olive oil, butter, eggs) to help tame their wilder edges.

## BEET GREENS

I've never seen beet greens for sale all on their own. What I have seen, however, are big vibrant green leaves etched with red still attached to their earthy sweet

roots. Beet greens are quite tender and cook up quickly, much like chard (their close relative). Cut the greens off from their beets and store them separately; the roots draw energy down from the leaves and will keep doing so even after they've been pulled from their underground dwelling.

## CHARD

The difference between Swiss chard, with its pearly white stems, and its more colorful siblings, red and golden chard, isn't just color. The darker the color of the stem, the more intense the flavor of the plant and the more likely it is to "bleed" and color the rest of the dish.

While certainly edible when raw, I tend to find the earthy flavor of chard, a chenopod like beets and spinach, a bit too tannic when uncooked, an effect that even the briefest connection to heat mitigates significantly.

## MUSTARD GREENS

The sharp, peppery, even spicy taste of mustard greens is fun to highlight. Nature packs a lot of flavor into leaves that take a bit more cooking than chard or beet greens, but break down a bit faster than heartier kales and collards. I've been known to use mustard greens in pretty much any application in this book, from raw in salads to stewed in

soups. When a recipe specifically calls for mustard greens and you can't find any at the market, dandelion greens or broccoli raab, even though more bitter, usually fit the bill.

## BROCCOLI RAAB

I've seen small sprigs of broccoli-like vegetables labeled "broccoli raab" at markets, but what I'm talking about is mainly greens, with a tiny broccoli-looking floret here and there. It has an assertive flavor (that's a nice way of saying it!) that benefits greatly from being cooked with other strong flavors like garlic, anchovies, and chiles. It likes to hang out with tomatoes a lot, too.

## GRAPE LEAVES AND FIG LEAVES

Smart farmers are starting to realize there is a market for their excess foliage, and I've seen fresh grape leaves and fig leaves for sale in California. These greens, whether fresh or preserved, are most commonly used to wrap around things. Fresh leaves definitely need to be blanched (see "How to Blanch Greens" on page 14) to soften their stiffness and scratchy surfaces. Once softened, they are easy to roll around grain fillings or plaster around fish before baking or grilling. If you use jarred preserved grape leaves, be sure to rinse them of their powerfully salty brine before cooking with them.

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### TURNIP GREENS

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Turnip greens are, as you might guess, the leafy tops of turnip plants. Certain turnip varieties are grown specifically for their greens, which is where piles of turnip greens at the grocery store come from. If, however, you grow turnips in the garden or happen to find bunches of turnips at the market with their greens still attached, they make good eating too. If you buy a bunch, cut the greens off and store them separately from the turnips; they will each last longer.

### BROCCOLI GREENS

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The leaves from the broccoli plant are rarely sold on their own, but can sometimes be found still attached to crowns sold with substantial stems. The plants grow tons of leaves, which have a lot in common with kale and collard greens in terms of texture and flavor. They're a real bonus for gardeners cultivating broccoli plants; use them in recipes calling for other hearty cooking greens.

### KOHLRABI GREENS

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Again, you need to be deeply into greens—either growing them yourself or getting them from a farmer—to have access to kohlrabi greens. The leafy tops of this alien-looking root vegetable are just as edible as turnip greens and beet greens. Like broccoli

greens, they have a sturdy texture and assertive flavor that's similar to kale.

### KALE

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The darling of healthful diets, kale comes in many varieties, from the wide curly green leaves labeled "curly kale," "green kale," or simply "kale" to the trim, deeply grooved but relatively flat dark blue-green leaves of dino kale, also known as lacinato kale, Tuscan kale, cavolo nero, or black kale. Red-tinged Russian kale is increasingly common as well. What all these varieties share is a high-fiber toughness of character and sharpness of flavor. I succeed at cooking kale when I embrace these qualities, rather than fight them. I turn to kale when I want a green to stand up and maintain its shape and texture, even as I try to break it down with rough treatment and high heat.

### COLLARD GREENS

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Like kale, collard greens are part of the cabbage family. They have the same rough texture, nutritional profile, and deep flavor of their more popular cousin. Both have remarkably sturdy leaves that hold up to harsh treatment, long cooking, and cold weather. Commonly thought of as a winter green, collard greens tend to have two growing seasons, one that starts in spring and early summer and another in the fall.

# A FEW HANDY TECHNIQUES

## HOW TO CLEAN AND STORE GREENS

Since greens have different textures, they respond differently to storage. The softer and more tender the leaves, the better they will keep if rinsed in plenty of cool water, spun dry, laid in a single layer on paper towels, rolled up, and kept in a plastic bag in the fridge. The paper towels absorb excess moisture, keeping the greens hydrated but not wet. Arugula, spinach, and herbs will keep easily twice as long—up to a week or more—when stored this way.

Hearty, stiff leaves like kale and collard greens can also be cleaned and stored that way. However, they do just fine simply wrapped in plastic for up to a few days.

## HOW TO DEAL WITH THICK STEMS

Kale, collard greens, chard, and mustard greens present the same problem to the cook: They all have the sticky wicket of thick stems that are tougher and take longer to cook than the leaves they run up into. Chard leaves, in particular, cook quite a bit more quickly than their brightly hued stems.

So what to do?

The classic solution is to stew or braise these greens until the thick stem is tender.

Another approach is to cut out the stem from the leaf. I do this one of two ways: I use a sharp

paring knife to cut the stem out, tracing its shape within the leaf, or I fold the leaf in half lengthwise so the stem sticks out and I can slice it off in one fell swoop.

With a pile of leaves and a pile of stems before you, now what? Cook them separately, of course. Either start cooking the stems first, adding the leaves later so they're all done at the same time; or use the leaves in one dish and the stems in another. Stems from hearty greens are delicious chopped up and added to soups, much like onions or celery. I even like to serve them as a dish all on their own. Sauté them in plenty of butter or oil and serve with a few gratings of Parmesan cheese and a squirt of lemon juice.

## HOW TO BLANCH GREENS

Blanching is the quick dunking of vegetables into a pot of vigorously boiling salted water. Greens, in particular, need to be cooled off as quickly as possible, either by transferring to a big bowl of ice water or running under cold water. This stops the cooking and sets their green color.

Once cool, you want to get as much water out of the leaves as possible. I find squeezing the leaves with my hands works best.

There are several reasons I blanch greens for use in a recipe. First, it softens tough leaves so they can be bent and folded just so. Second, it lets me get the



water out of the greens, which is handy when using greens as a stuffing. Third, blanching is a great way to mitigate the harsher bitter edge of greens that some people don't like. Feel free to blanch kale and collard greens before using them in any of these recipes to soften their flavors. You may lose some vitamins along the way, but if it helps you eat more greens, that's fine. As your palate adjusts to the bolder flavors of hearty greens you may stop blanching them, except when needed to make them pliable or to cook them down before using them in a dish.

#### EATING RAW GREENS

Even the toughest, least yielding of greens (kale and collard greens, I'm looking at you) are, in the end, edible raw. And not just in times of famine or when you're lost in the wild without matches. I rather like the pushback you get when you chew these greens, although I do tend to slice them ribbon-thin to make mastication less of a drag.

Another technique is to break the greens down physically by massaging them with your hands. The motion is much like kneading dough, although I prefer to call it "massaging," because it sounds a bit lewd and raw greens can use some sexing up. No matter what you call it, simply rub the leaves to soften them. And by "rub" I don't mean a

## MY FAVORITE WAY TO COOK GREENS

I do have a favorite way, absolutely. First, I rinse them, trim the ends off the stems, and then cut out the thick stem up into the leaf. Sometimes I use the stems for something else, but usually I chop them up and set them aside while I tackle the leaves. Sometimes I'll leave the leaves in big pieces, but generally I cut them into ribbon-like shreds.

I heat a big pot over high heat, add olive oil or butter or even bacon fat if I have it in the fridge, and sauté a clove or two of extremely thinly sliced garlic. I often add ½ tsp of red chile flakes or a fresh sliced chile at this point—we like it spicy at my house. When the garlic is just starting to turn color and get a teensy bit golden, I add the stems, if I'm using them. I then add about ½ tsp of fine sea salt and 2 to 3 tbsp of water, cover, reduce the heat to low, and let them cook until softened, usually 5 to 10 minutes. Then I turn the heat back up, add the greens, which are still a bit wet from being rinsed off earlier, and stir frequently to bring the ones on the bottom that have wilted up to the top of the pot and get others on the bottom.

For heartier greens like kale and collard greens, I'll cover the pot and reduce the heat again to let them get tender; I might even add some more liquid to keep things steamy. For spinach or chard or even mustard greens, I'll just cook and stir until they're beaten down, darkened a bit, and the liquid in the pot has mostly evaporated. Adjust the seasoning and maybe spritz with a bit of lemon juice. Eat your greens!

From this favorite method, there are plenty of things you can do:

- Add minced anchovies with the garlic.
- Brown bacon or pancetta in the pan at the start.
- Use dry sherry or white wine or broth or cider or beer instead of water.
- Finish off with a drizzle of nut oil or chile oil.
- Put a poached or fried egg on top.

gentle stroking, I'm talking serious deep-tissue sports massage here. There's no need to be shy; these leaves can stand up to rough, Reiki-like treatment. The process can be sped up if you use

a bit of oil and salt, as well. A salt scrub and an oil rubdown—it's a spa treatment that relaxes the stiffest, most uptight of greens.



PEARLED BARLEY

BLACK QUINOA

BARLEY

BROWN RICE

SPELT





WHEAT BERRIES

WILD RICE

FARRO

QUINOA

BUCKWHEAT GROATS



# GRAINS

Grains are seeds. If you're going to get picky, grains are specifically the seeds of plants in the grass family. Here, I approach grains with more of a culinary bent, treating several seeds that are not technically grains as if they are grains because they taste so good and we cook them as if they were. Buckwheat and quinoa, for example, aren't from the grass family. It doesn't make me love them any less.

When cooking with whole grains it's as important to know how grains are processed as it is to identify which grain you're dealing with. So we'll begin with the processing:

**Whole berries**, sometimes called **groats**, have had their hull, which humans can't digest, removed; otherwise the whole grain with bran and germ remains untouched. The whole groats of wheat (including its cousins like spelt and emmer), rye, barley, and oats can be used interchangeably in recipes.

**Pearled** or **polished grains** have varying levels of the outer bran layer rubbed off to make the grains take less time to cook. They lose some of their nutrition, of course, but are useful for quicker dishes and have a less chewy texture. Whole wheat berries, for example, can take more than an hour to make tender, whereas even

semi-pearled farro (part of the wheat family) is usually done in about 30 minutes.

**Grits** or **cut grains** are whole berries or groats that have been chopped up. They cook up quicker than whole berries and have a more porridge-like texture when cooked. Cracked wheat, bulgur, polenta, and steel-cut oats are grits.

**Flour** is grain that has been milled or ground into a powder. The whole berry is ground to make whole-grain flour; the bran and germ are removed first to make refined flour.

There are a few recipes that call for whole-grain flour in this book—how could I resist sharing those quinoa crackers (see page 43)? But for the most part, I contained myself to using whole berries, pearled grains, and cut grains for the full texture, flavor, and, yes, nutrition, they bring.

I tried to keep to grains that are widely available at natural foods stores and specialty groceries, although plenty of grocery stores may carry only brown rice and maybe barley and bulgur.

## BARLEY

Most of the barley that Americans ingest takes the form of beer or whiskey, which gives one little sense of its wonderfully light, earthy flavor and its slightly chewy texture. It is a

relative of wheat but has a short growing season, making it a popular grain in northerly or mountainous places where the summers are painfully brief. Barley works with greens of all types, but because of its softness you can use it with tender greens or other times when you want a little less chew from a whole-grain berry, as in barley “risotto” (see page 101).

Natural food stores sometimes stock hulled barley, a true whole grain. More often, however, pearled barley is the only option. Pearled barley can be cooked in 25 to 30 minutes, whereas you’ll want to allow at least 40 minutes for hulled barley.

#### BUCKWHEAT

Buckwheat isn’t technically a grain. It is a seed, but not from the grass family. It’s in the knotweed family that includes rhubarb and sorrel. Like barley, it does well in cold climates. Like quinoa, another pseudo-grain, buckwheat contains all eight amino acids humans require as well as a deep nutty-meets-earthly flavor. It always stuns me how cheeses and sour cream and eggs can soften its strong flavor and bring out its nuttiness. It’s the perfect foil, in many ways, for greens, since it can stand up to the strong bitter flavors or highlight the delicate crunch of more tender specimens. You can

buy raw or already toasted (and much more flavorful) buckwheat groats at natural food stores.

One thing to watch out for: Buckwheat turns mushy in the blink of an eye. Different varieties cook at different rates, too, so test it frequently while cooking.

#### CORN

Corn can do anything. Or, rather, we’ve taught it to do anything. We’ve taught it to work as a starch, a sweetener, and a fat replacement. We’ve powdered it into beauty products; we’ve even convinced it to be a compostable “plastic” bag. Here, I’m just talking about whole dried kernels of corn that have, in some fashion, been cut up. Polenta and cornmeal are what you’ll find in these pages, where their lightly sweet flavor, which is just a bit nutty, highlights the bitter edge of greens.

#### FARRO

Not everything labeled “farro” is the same, so there is going to be some confusion on this one. It’s not even clear that it is its own grain and not simply the berry of a variety of spelt or emmer or other plant in the wheat family. In any case, it’s sold as its own thing, and I find its softer texture and nutty flavor a fabulous foil for greens of all kinds, whether used in a salad, in a soup, or cooked as a pilaf.

#### MILLET

I can only explain my general dislike of millet thusly: It thrives in hot, dry places. I do not. It has a stunningly bland flavor I see no reason to seek out. Also, it is, honestly, a pain to cook because it cooks unevenly. Getting a pot of these small yellow grains to all be tender without some of them turning mushy is well-nigh impossible. It’s familiar to most of us as birdseed and maybe it should stay that way.

That said, millet is a nutrition-packed, gluten-free little number that others seem to enjoy. If you want to give it a try, you can do one of two things: Cook it like polenta, into a porridge, and add plenty of butter or cheese or other fat and flavorful elements; or sauté it in a bit of oil until it turns golden. When it starts to brown, pour in 2½ to 3 cups/600 to 720 ml water or broth for every 1 cup/200 g of millet, cover, and simmer until tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

#### OATS

Like barley, oats can thrive where the more popular wheat (I say “popular” because its flour makes such lovely bread) cannot. It can endure cold and rain. So it makes sense that when we think of oats, our minds turn to Scotland and Ireland. There, whole oat berries and steel-cut oats are as common as rolled oats for oatmeal are on American breakfast

tables (rolled oats are whole groats that are steamed and then rolled flat before being dried). It's the heartier versions that I use, and they're particularly good with tender and medium greens—spinach, chard, mustard greens—since oats have a rather soft texture and sweet flavor. Whole oat groats or berries cook up just like wheat berries, rye kernels, or hulled barley—the four can be used more or less interchangeably.

#### QUINOA AND AMARANTH

Quinoa and amaranth are closely related, botanically speaking, to chard and spinach and beets. No wonder they taste so good together. Like buckwheat, quinoa isn't technically a grain. Yet I use plenty of it in this book. It's easy to cook, has fabulous flavor, contains the complete protein profile we need in our diets, and is now widely available. Amaranth, smaller and seedier than quinoa, is tricky to find, so I've left it out here, but it cooks up into a lovely porridge.

Bonus of both plants: Their greens are edible and tasty. If you find them, use them like spinach or chard.

To cook quinoa, rinse it, rubbing it under running water, and drain it well (this removes its bitter coating). Heat a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring 1 cup/240 ml water

or broth, 1 cup/170 g quinoa, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp fine sea salt to a boil, cover, and turn the heat to low. Cook, undisturbed, until the quinoa is tender and the liquid is completely absorbed, about 15 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, leaving the cover on, and let sit for 5 minutes. Uncover and fluff with a fork.

Alas, raw quinoa cannot be toasted to any pleasant culinary effect. You must cook it before you toast it. Then you end up with a fabulously nutty and crunchy item perfect for sprinkling on salads or anything you like (see *Toasted Quinoa*, page 31).

#### RICE

So many varieties of rice, so little time. For our purposes, we're talking brown rice, which isn't a variety, but simply any rice hulled and sold with its bran intact instead of polished away to create white rice. Brown rice can be long grain, medium grain, short grain, and sweet. Basmati brown rice is a long-grain variety; brown sushi rice is a short grain. In general, the longer the grain, the fluffier the rice once cooked; the shorter the grain, the stickier. Many markets offer only long-grain brown rice, a variety I like best when cooked as a pilaf.

Black rice, glistening and dark purple once cooked, is also a whole grain. If you find some, use it in a salad (see page 37) or cook it with two parts water to rice.

Bring to a boil, cover, simmer for 20 minutes, take off the heat, and leave covered for 5 minutes. Then just fluff with a fork. Serve with brightly colored vegetables or snowy white tofu to highlight how darn pretty it is.

#### RYE

Like buckwheat, rye has an assertive flavor that makes it a natural to eat with dark greens. Whole-grain rye flour is fairly easy to come by, but whole rye berries will require a trip online or to a natural foods store. Rye berries take at least an hour to cook when simmered. Feel free to use rye in any recipe calling for whole farro, spelt, or barley. Rye is chewier and stronger flavored than other whole grains, so it will amp up the dish a notch.

#### SPELT

Spelt is an ancient grain from the wheat family. It has a reddish hue and a chewy tenderness when cooked, as well as a decidedly sweeter flavor than other grains. Use it in place of wheat berries or farro whenever you like. I've been known to turn to it in times of barley deficit as well.

#### WHEAT

Wheat is a big category. A lot of the whole grains you find when you venture out into the whole-grain world are, more or less, wheat. Farro, usually sold pearled or semi-pearled, is part of the



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great wheat family, as is spelt and emmer and kamut and einkorn, all ancient varieties of this common grain. Wheat berries are the hulled kernels of wheatgrass. They can be from hard or soft wheat varieties—hard wheat is higher in gluten and protein than soft wheat. Cracked wheat is wheat berries cut up like grits or polenta. Bulgur is wheat berries that have been parboiled, dried, and then cut up. Bulgur is widely available and cooks quickly, which is handy.

#### **WILD RICE**

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I don't mean to brag, but I know my way around a pot of wild rice. I grew up in Minnesota and I'm sort of a snob about it. When I visit my parents, I haul back bags of the real stuff—the seeds from a wild grass that grows along the lake edges and in streams in northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Canada. The vast majority of what can be purchased in the rest of the world is the kind that's cultivated in the Central Valley of California. It's fine. There's nothing wrong with it. To a Minnesotan, though, cultivated wild rice is oddly uniform, confusingly completely black, and a somewhat sad facsimile of the truly wild stuff. In any case, the flavor of wild rice—grassy, nutty, with sometimes a hint of muddy (in a weird and compellingly good way!)—is ideal with the deep, dark flavor of kale.

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# A FEW HANDY TECHNIQUES

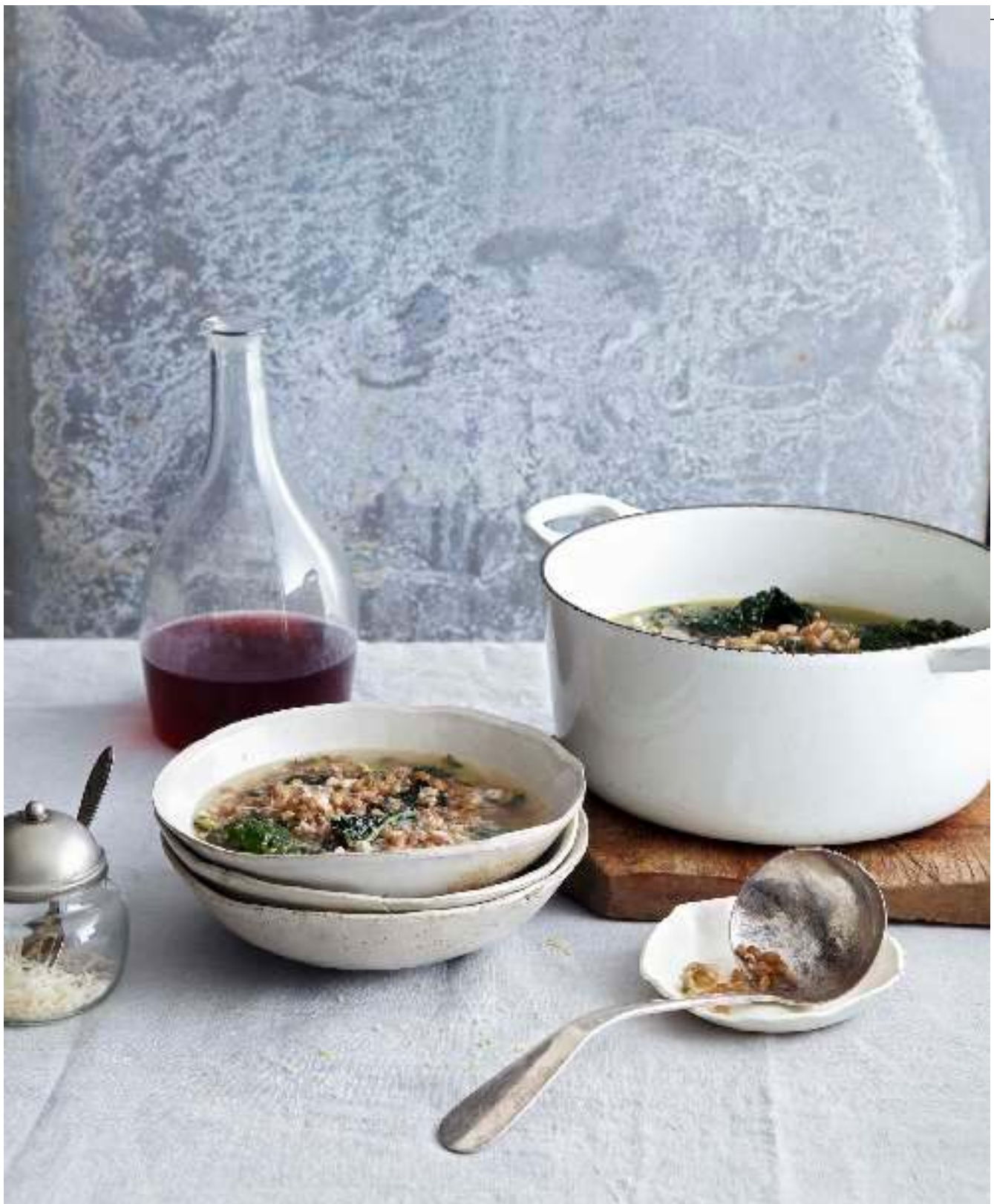
## HOW TO BOIL GRAINS

Boiling, in general, has gotten a bad reputation. It's true, boiling food does make it lose some of its nutrients, which leach out into the water and are then tossed down the drain. But boiling grains, especially the tougher ones like rye berries and wheat berries, lets you know they're completely done before you stop cooking them without having to add or boil off water at the end. It also gets some of their starch out, which you may want for a clear-looking soup, for example. This method works particularly well for barley, wheat berries, oat berries, spelt, farro, rye, rice, and wild rice.

Rinse grains with cool water and put them in a pot that is at least four times as big as the volume of grains. Cover the grains with plenty of cool water—by at least 1 in./2.5 cm and more if you like. Add about ½ tsp fine sea salt for every 1 to 1½ cups/240 to 360 ml water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a steady simmer (no need to cover unless instructed to do so) and cook until the grains are tender to the bite. Pearled grains are ready in 25 to 40 minutes, whole berries closer to 1 hour. Drain and use grains in salads, add to soups, or toss in casseroles. Or serve them hot with butter and salt.

## USING ALL THE GRAINS

When you find yourself with a handful each of medium-grain brown rice, quinoa, barley, and spelt—or whatever combination of whole grains you have bits and pieces of—put them to use in a grain porridge. Rinse them, put them in a pot at least four times as big as their volume, and cover them with plenty of water (for sweet porridge) or broth (for savory porridge). Bring to a boil, then partially cover and simmer, stirring when it occurs to you and adding more liquid as the grains absorb what's in the pot, until all the grains are tender to the bite. They won't all cook at the same rate, and that's fine. The quicker-cooking grains will turn a bit mushy and make it porridge instead of a bowl of cooked grains. Serve a sweet porridge topped with butter and/or cream and brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, or agave nectar. Chopped nuts and dried or fresh fruit are good too. Or serve a savory porridge with bits of leftover shredded chicken, diced pork, or grated baked tofu, as well as minced shallot or green onion or chives, and chile oil or hot sauce, if you like.







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