

Parched Grains

Homemade bulgur and Brewer's grain flakes

The basic process of parching or drying grains and legumes generally involves first cooking moist grains, so that the starch is gelatinized, followed by roasting or toasting to produce dry grains.

Both bulgur and brewer's grain flakes are commercially available. Perhaps the only reason to make your own parched wheat might be if you have a supply of heritage wheat that you would like to use in the parched form, for example as bulgur or brewer's (pre-gelatinized) grain flakes.

Parched grains and legumes are ancient foods¹, with many examples such as *parboiled rice, freekeh, bulgur, popcorn, puffed rice, rolled oats, and rye crispbread*. They represent convenience foods in that they are already at least partially cooked so that preparation time is much less than for the raw grains. In addition, the parched grains generally store better than the raw grain. Various processes are used by the Western cereal industry for a wide range of grain foods, especially breakfast cereals. In African and Asian cuisines parched grains and legumes such as *spiced chickpeas*, are also a normal part of the diet.

To further speed the cooking or rehydration process of parched grains, they can be reduced to cracked grains as is the case for bulgur, or they can be flaked before they are steamed and oven dried, as for wheat, and rye flakes. Milling parched grains to flour makes them completely absorb warm water almost instantly. Whether cracked, flaked, or milled to a flour these parched grains are useful as a source of pre-gelatinized starch.

Here the recipe is for homemade bulgur and brewer's wheat flakes; they are steam cooked and oven dried to low moisture. The intention is to use the bulgur and brewer's grain flakes as a source of gelatinized starch for addition to bread recipes; to increase hydration and so enhance softness. The parching process increases the dietary fiber content and some B-vitamins. Folate is increased 2 to 3 times in bulgur compared with that found in native whole wheat.

An important historical use of the parching process must have been for threshing hulled grains, *spelt, emmer, einkorn and rice*. Even today parboiling rice is a means of easily dehulling rice, while simultaneously making it quicker cooking. The soaking, and steam cooking stages in the process cause an expansion of the grain enough to split the hull (husk) on the hulled grains. When the grains in their hulls, are dried in the final stage of parching, the hulls become loose enough that they can be easily threshed away, so freeing the grains, but in a parched form.

¹ Wikipedia

Method

<i>Ingredient</i>	<i>Amount in grams</i>	<i>Bakers percent</i>
Clean wheat grain	200	100
Charcoal filtered tap water	50	25

[] In a large bowl, toss clean wheat grain with filtered water, until evenly wet and with some free water remaining. Cover bowl and leave at room temperature, 68°F (20°C).

[] Allow the wheat to moisten for 1 - 2 days. *No longer than 2 days because sprouting will produce long roots and shoots after 2 days.* Toss the wheat every 8-12 hours to keep grains evenly moist.

[] If making wheat flakes, send moistened grain through a kitchen grain flaker² at this stage. *This is preferable to attempting the flaking after steaming, which makes the grains too firm to satisfactorily flake in a simple flaking machine.*

[] Spread the moistened wheat on a baking tray and steam bake at 212°F (100°C) for one hour. *If steam is not available in oven, spray extra moisture onto the grains, and cover with a matching baking tray so that the grains self-steam.*

[] Dry the cooked grains using a food dehydrator at warm room temperature 95°F(35°C) for 1-2 days.

[] Finish the drying by spreading grain on a baking tray in a dry oven at 400°F (204°C) for 5-10 minutes. Ideally the finished parched grains should contain approximately 5% moisture.

[] Homemade bulgur wheat can be cracked in a home mill with widely separated stones or burrs.

² Such as the Wolfgang Mock Flaker.