

Part 4, Chapter 46: Processed Flour and Gluten

One of the biggest issues with modern food is that it is processed for shelf life. A hundred years ago it would have been preposterous for food to last for months on the shelf, let alone years. Of flour in particular, the milled flower was subject to quickly getting bugs in it if not sold and used quickly. Modern milling techniques have taken a serious toll on the intrinsic healthy value of whole grains. In talking about the loss of potassium in modern flour Dr. Bragg makes the following observation:

Robbed grains: The miller refines and processes our grains to get white flour that will keep for years ... that becomes the staff of death! Even bugs have more sense—they won't eat it because it has been robbed of its potassium and vital life-giving qualities!{1}

We have little moth type insects that try to get into everything. They can be quite a nuisance. The only sure fire way we've found to keep them out is to keep certain grains refrigerated. Of the flour and cane sugar on the counter—mostly left from when my mother was with us—they won't go near either, even if left opened. It makes you think ...

[The] shocking loss of potassium and nutrients in making white flour: In milling wheat, the miller refines out 25 important food elements, including vital amino acids, vitamin E, bran, the rich B-complex vitamins and potassium. Cows fed refined grain, with the potassium milled out and de-germed, die early of heart failure. [It's a very serious issue.] The more they refine vital potassium out of foods, the sicker Americans get.{2}

One of the reasons why consuming Bragg's apple cider vinegar is so important—apples in general actually—is because they replenish the body's potassium. Still, even if using whole milled flour—and it's almost impossible to get truly whole milled flour—flour and flour products have issues.

Any school child knows that if you mix flour and water together you get paste. Products that contain flour, commercial bread in particular, essentially turns into paste in the digestive tract. Biscuits and gravy used to be one of my favorite breakfasts. To say that it was filling would grossly be understating their impact. To say that it felt like swallowing rocks—that would be closer to the truth.

Too, with all the nutrients stripped out, it requires enormous enzyme reserves and nutrients just for the body to do anything useful with it. For the most part such meals are basically turned into stored fat, just as processed sugar is. The worst issue of all is that milled grains are totally devoid of fiber. Fiber is critical to keep food stuffs moving along in the digestive tract. This is also a fundamental problem with meat and dairy: They contain virtually zero fiber. One of the reasons that eating lots of fresh vegetables with its fiber is in tact is to provide the necessary bulk to push digested food along and prevent it from getting stuck in the intestinal walls. Fundamentally both sugar and processed grains is turned into a refined carbohydrate when processing it.

A refined carbohydrate is a carbohydrate that has been altered by machinery to

increase its shelf-life. The refinement process transforms a complex carbohydrate into a simple carbohydrate by removing the original natural elements such as fiber, healthy oils, vitamins, and minerals.

Examples include breads, crackers, pastries, baked goods, pastas, most commercial cereals, ice cream, chocolates, pizza, sandwiches, fast foods and snack foods of all types. These products are so highly refined that the body doesn't even recognize them as food.

White flour is, literally, nutritionally dead and slowly kills you. If you tried to live on white bread alone for 60-days, you would die of malnutrition. The reason is that it lacks the healthy elements found in the whole wheat kernel. In addition to certain B-vitamins (niacin, riboflavin and thiamine), a whole wheat kernel contains two important fibers—bran and germ—necessary for its digestion. These health-giving fibers and nutrients are stripped away from the whole wheat kernel during the refinement and bleaching process that make white flour, leading to a product that is so nutritionally depleted that manufacturers are required by federal law to add certain vitamins back in.^{3}



The refining process is bad enough but there is also an additional issue related to flour: Gluten.

Gluten is a sticky protein found in wheat. The prevalence of wheat and wheat products, especially processed and refined varieties, have led to a greater percentage of the population developing gluten intolerance or an allergy to gluten.^{4}

I suspect that to a lesser or greater extent we are all sensitive to gluten. For someone with celiac disease, an autoimmune disease, they are critically sensitive to it. It will cause horrible digestive symptoms. Still, gluten is not necessarily without its impact on people without this disease. It's called non-celiac gluten sensitivity.

The obvious way to find out if you're gluten sensitive is to totally avoid gluten for two weeks and then introduce it back into your diet. For Emmale and me, while neither of us are gluten intolerant, we have both found that we feel much better by avoiding bread and pastry products, which also tend to be loaded with sugar. Again, on a diet that is 90%-95% vegan, one is not going to be consuming much sugar or flour anyway. For what little is consumed, the body can usually process it without a problem.