

Coconut Flour:

A Gluten-Free, Low-Carb Alternative to Wheat

By Dr Bruce Fife, ND

When I first started experimenting with gluten free baking I quickly became discouraged. It required four or five different types of flour plus an assortment of other ingredients like xanthan gum, vinegar, powdered milk, etc. Baking was a chore and the end result wasn't always as I expected.

That's why I fell in love with coconut flour—a gluten-free flour that is gaining in popularity. Unlike other gluten-free flours you don't need to combine it with a dozen other ingredients in order to make delicious tasting baked goods. Baking with coconut flour is relatively simple. Basically all you need is coconut flour, eggs, and oil. Mix them in a bowl and bake. What could be simpler? And the end result is comparable in quality to products made with wheat flour.

Coconut flour is simply coconut meat that has been dehydrated, defatted, and ground into a powder. It looks and feels much like any other flour. You can't make coconut flour at home using dehydrated shredded coconut. The fat content is too high and you would end up with something resembling albino peanut butter. Coconut flour can be found in many health food stores and on the Internet.

When I mention coconut flour to anyone, one of the first questions I get is: "Does it make everything taste like coconut?" The answer is "No." Coconut flour has a very mild flavor. In fact, it tastes about as bland as wheat flour. Baked goods made with coconut flour don't taste at all like coconut. If you make a vanilla cake, it will taste like vanilla cake. You would have to add coconut extract or shredded coconut to give it a coconut flavor.

Not only is coconut flour gluten-free, it is low in carbs and loaded with health promoting fiber. In fact, coconut flour has the highest fiber content of any flour. It contains twice as much



fiber as wheat bran or flaxseed meal but tastes a whole lot better than both. Coconut flour is 61 percent fiber and about 10 percent digestible carbohydrate. Although it doesn't have any gluten, it doesn't lack protein. It contains 12 percent protein which is about as much as whole wheat flour.

The high fiber and low carbohydrate content makes coconut flour ideal for low-carb diets. Fiber doesn't provide any calories and helps slow down the absorption of sugar so it is excellent for dieters and diabetics.

Because coconut flour does not contain gluten you cannot use it in recipes designed for wheat flour. You need recipes specially formulated for coconut flour. These recipes are available in the book *Cooking with Coconut Flour: A Delicious Low-Carb, Gluten-Free Alternative to Wheat*. All of the recipes in this book are completely wheat free, using only coconut flour. No other flours are needed. Recipes include breads, muffins, cakes, cookies, crackers, pies, and even main dishes like chicken pot pie and chicken and dumpling stew. Recipes include a mix of higher carb and reduced carb options.

