

Durum Wheat vs. Soft Wheat Flour

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Learning to distinguish between the different types of flour is important, since not all flours work equally well for making bread and pasta.

Flour has always been people's primary source of sustenance, especially Italians, seeing as that's what we use to make bread and pasta, two staples of our diet. Flour can come from wheat, corn, barley, spelt, rice, oats, [rye](#) [2], millet, [Khorasan wheat](#) [3], buckwheat and chestnut.

Wheat is the most important cereal for making bread and pasta. It's where we get white flour from (that comes from soft wheat—[Triticum vulgare](#) [4]) and bran (that comes from durum wheat—*Triticum durum*).

Knowing the difference between flour made with soft wheat and flour made with durum wheat is important insofar as not all flours work equally well for making bread, pasta, or even sweets and cookies. The type of flour you use affects the final product: its color and its protein value, its level of water absorption and its granulometry (or particle size). The greater the particle size, the better it is for pasta; smaller particle sizes are ideal for bread and products made with yeast.



Two different types

Soft wheat and durum wheat belong to two separate species that form part of the Gramineae family. Soft wheat flour (soft because the grain breaks easily) has a powdery, indefinite quality to it, with small granules with rounded edges.

Dough made with this white flour is highly extendable, relatively tough, and is usually used for making bread and leavened products, like sweets (cakes, biscotti, brioche) or pizza. It is also used for making fresh pasta and egg pasta. Soft wheat flour contains less protein and absorbs less water than flour made with durum wheat.

Different Properties

Durum wheat or durum semolina is made by milling durum, a grain that is difficult to break apart. The large grain has sharp edges and is a yellow-amber color. Their color, which varies depending on the grain used, is transmitted to the products, making them darker than products made with soft wheat flour. Unlike soft wheat flour, dough made from durum is less extendable and tougher, which makes it good for making bread (in fact, it's often used for homemade bread) and pasta.

By milling the grain twice, you get remilled durum wheat semolina, a subtler durum flour also used in bread and pasta production.

Durum wheat flour contains more proteins and gluten than soft wheat flour and a higher capacity for absorbing water, having more crushed starch granules. The products made with durum wheat flour keep longer, have a lower glycemic index and contain carotenoids, organic pigments that can bond and eliminate antioxidants.

Durum wheat [semolina](#) [5] found in stores and used for making sweet and savory semolina, vegetable and meat pies, and sweets is produced by milling the grain that, in this case, yields a larger grain.

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Links

[1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/flourdue1417037028.jpg>

[2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rye>

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khorasan_wheat

[4] <http://usa.weleda.com/ingredients/wheat-triticum-vulgare.aspx>

[5] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semolina>