

A scientist who knows his wheat

Dr Maarten Stapper says paddocks are like the human body — they're both complex biological systems where simple solutions often don't work.

A Canberra-based scientist specialising in wheat, Maarten travels extensively across NSW to share his holistic ideas about the grain with farmers.

He says wheat has been cultivated for 9000 years but its use has shifted from raw grain like sprouts and cracked wheat to highly processed grain such as bleached white flour, thus reducing the nutritional value and introducing negatives.

"The mineral content in grain has also been decreasing with years of production depleting mineral availability in soils," he says.

"When some micronutrients are deficient, we have to re-mineralise soils to produce healthy food. Quality compost in your garden can activate the soil biology which delivers nutrients to plants."

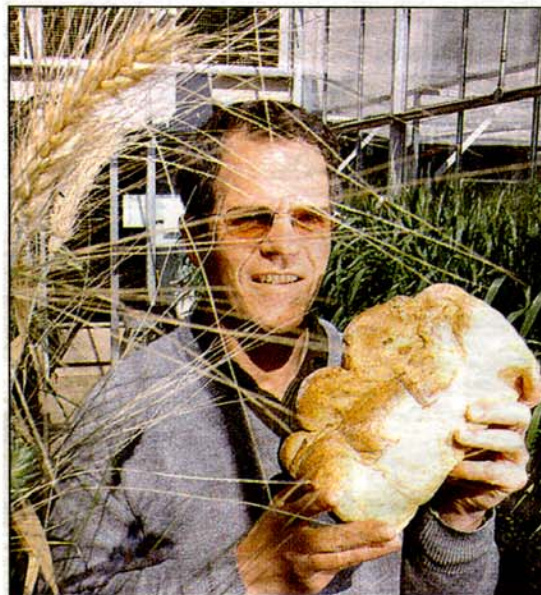
Maarten grew up in the 1950s in a rural village in the Netherlands where he says they never had white bread and the loaves his mother bought were eaten to the last bite. It was not until he arrived in Australia 20 years ago that he heard of "stale" day-old bread.

His preferred loaf is millet bread made with wholemeal, unbleached white and millet flour with honey and sea salt added to the yeast, and sunflower or olive oil added to the dough.

"Stone ground whole wheat flour is nutritionally the best because it is largely unprocessed and retains all the valuable nutrients," he says.

Maarten says all seeds and grains are latent powerhouses of nutritional goodness and life energy. Add water to get the factory started, then sunlight will do the rest.

Sprouting increases vitamin content and makes



Energy food: Dr Maarten Stapper says grains are powerhouses of nutritional goodness and life energy.

micronutrients of seeds available in an easily digestible form. "Sprouts grown from wheat have a crunchy texture and sweet flavour and can be used in breads," he says. "Let them grow and you will produce wheatgrass, a powerful detoxifier as juice."

Maarten, who has lived in Iraq and Syria, says the first example of grain processing was cracked

wheat, or couscous. "[This is] a traditional use of wheat in the Middle East in salads such as tabbouleh and as a foundation for main meals."

Maarten will next week introduce a lecture by soil biology expert Dr Elaine Ingham, from Oregon State University, at the CIT Department of Horticulture in Weston.

Elaine will explain the role of good compost and soil in growing healthy plants in the home garden and vegie patch, as well as efficient use of water in biological management, on September 5.

Block B, CIT Weston Campus, Heyson Street, Weston. From 4.30pm; entry \$20, concession \$10. Contact Dr Maarten Stapper on 6246 5091.

Tabbouleh

150g cracked wheat (couscous)

2 bunches flat-leaved parsley, chopped finely

8-9 spring onions, trimmed and finely sliced, including some green parts

6 organic tomatoes

10-12 tspns olive oil

2-3 unwaxed lemons, juiced

2 tbsp chopped mint

Method: Put the wheat in a bowl, cover with water, leave to soak for 30-60 mins. Drain in a sieve and place in a serving dish. Add lemon juice, 10 tspns olive oil, sea salt and freshly ground pepper. Dice tomatoes and add to the wheat. Taste and adjust the seasoning.



Kitchen Garden

With
Susan
Parsons