

# Boston

## Is Purple Bread Healthy?

Registered dietitian Kate Scarlata discusses the trendy new concoction.

By [Jamie Ducharme](#) | [Hub Health](#) | March 24, 2016

It sounds like the answer to your prayers: A product that tastes like the white bread of your youth, but is actually, miraculously, good for you.

That's the narrative around purple bread, the creation of Singaporean food scientist Zhou Weibiao. The bread, which is not yet on the market, is made with [anthocyanins](#)—antioxidant-rich flavonoids that give certain foods a purple hue—extracted from black rice. The result, [says Weibiao](#), is a tasty, nutrient-rich bread that's digested 20 percent more slowly than the carb-y goodness you've been eating your whole life.

But does the science deserve the hype? We asked Kate Scarlata, a Medway-based registered dietitian, to go behind the sexy headlines and give us the scoop.

**1. Sorry, but it's probably not a superfood.** While it's got some good properties, Scarlata says purple bread is still bread, for better or for worse. "Is it such a big bang for its buck? I don't really see that," she says. "[But] if you broke down a French roll versus the purple bread, would it offer a little more nutrition? Probably."



Black rice photo via Shutterstock

**2. The slower digestion time may not matter.** Purple bread has been touted for its slower digestion time and lower glycemic index, which may prevent blood sugar spikes. But Scarlata points out that the food likely wouldn't be consumed in a vacuum. "Maybe eating the purple bread, by itself, would be better than eating a piece of bread, but most of us are eating [bread] as a sandwich, or with peanut butter," she

says. “And when you’re eating a mixed meal anyway, the glycemic index is going to be different because it’s all of the food together.”

Plus, she notes, the science hasn’t yet shown how the different formula affects the gut and the microbiome.

**3. It still contains wheat.** Purple bread is not an alternative for those who can’t or don’t eat gluten—it’s just a new bread recipe. “You take a food that’s marginal in nutrition and then infuse it with something,” Scarlata says.

**4. You can get anthocyanins elsewhere.** Scarlata says anthocyanins are, indeed, something to look for, but that people can simply eat foods in which they naturally occur, like black rice, purple grapes, and red wine.

**5. Regular grains are still fine.** “I probably wouldn’t [recommend it to clients],” Scarlata says. “I tend to just go with foods as they exist in nature, rather than foods we’re manipulating.”

Keep on choosing whole grains and eating a well-balanced diet, instead of counting the days until purple bread finds its way to supermarket shelves.