Did you know there are six basic classes of wheat?

Wheat is the principal U.S. cereal grain for export and domestic consumption. It is also the fourth leading U.S. field crop and our leading export crop. Wheat has two distinct growing seasons. Winter wheat, which accounts for 70-80 percent of production, is sown in the fall and harvested in the spring or summer. Spring wheat is planted in the spring and harvested in late summer or early fall.

There are several hundred varieties of wheat, which fall into one of six classes. Where each class is grown depends on rainfall, temperature, soil condition and tradition. In addition to time of year that they are planted and harvested, wheat classes are also determined by hardness, color and shape of kernels.

**Hard Red Winter** - The dominant U.S. export class and the largest class produced each year, Hard Red Winter is produced in the Great Plains states, a large interior area extending from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to Mexico. With a wide range of protein content, good milling and baking characteristics, it is used to produce bread, rolls and all-purpose flour. Major buyers include Russia, China, Japan, Morocco and Poland.

**Hard Red Spring** - This wheat contains the highest percentage of protein, making it an excellent bread wheat with superior milling and baking characteristics. The majority of the crop is grown in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. It is exported largely to Central America, Japan, the Philippines and Russia.

**Soft Red Winter** - Grown primarily east of the Mississippi River, Soft Red Winter wheat is high yielding, but has a relatively low percentage of protein. It is used for flat breads, cakes, pastries and crackers. Largest customers are China, Egypt, and Morocco.

**Durum** - The hardest of all wheats, and consistently the class with the lowest export volume, Durum accounts for less than 5 percent of all U.S. wheat exports. It is grown in the same northern states as Hard Red Spring, although 70-80 percent of the annual production comes from North Dakota. Used to make semolina flour for pasta, it is the largest importer is Algeria.

**Hard White** - The newest class of wheat to be grown in the United States, Hard White Wheat is closely related to red wheats (except for color genes). This wheat has a milder, sweeter flavor, equal fiber and similar milling and baking properties. It is used mainly in yeast breads, hard rolls, bulgur, tortillas and oriental noodles. Hard White wheat is primarily used in domestic markets, although it is exported in limited quantities.

**Soft White** - Used in much the same way as Soft Red Winter, Soft White wheat is grown mainly in the Pacific Northwest, with crops in California, Michigan, Wisconsin and New York, as well. High yielding, but with low protein, this wheat is used to produce flour for baking cakes, crackers, cookies, pastries, quick breads, muffins and snack foods. This wheat is exported mostly to the Far East Asian region.