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## Quinoa

One of the healthiest foods around may be one of the least known. Quinoa (pronounced *keen-wa*) is the latest news in health foods that has been causing quite a stir with health nuts and doctors alike. Grown for thousands of years, and a main staple of the Inca civilization, the United Nations has recently classified this super-food as a “super-crop.”

What’s so great about it, you ask? For one thing, quinoa contains more protein than any other grain (an average of 16.2%, compared with 7.5% for rice, 9.9% for millet and 14% for wheat). It is also a good source of dietary fiber and is high in magnesium, potassium and iron and a good source of phosphorous, calcium, vitamin E and several B vitamins. Quinoa is also gluten-free and easy to digest, and it contains an almost perfect balance of all eight essential amino acids needed for tissue development.

Although when cooked it is thought of as a grain, it is actually a relative of leafy green vegetables like spinach and Swiss chard. To look at it, the grains are small yellow flattened spheres, approximately 1.5 to 2 mm in diameter and, when cooked, the germ coils into a small "tail" that lends a pleasant crunch.

When purchasing quinoa, look for the larger whiter varieties, which are considered superior. Quinoa can be stored in the kitchen cupboard or, if you’re going to be storing it for over a month it is recommended that you place it in the refrigerator or freezer.

Because of the bitter “saponin” covering the grain, it is recommended that you thoroughly rinse the grain until the water runs clear prior to cooking it. From there, combine 1/2 cup quinoa with 1 cup water and simmer for 15 minutes, or until tender. For a nuttier taste, toast the quinoa in a dry pan for about 5 minutes before cooking. To help introduce you to quinoa, give these easy and healthy recipes a try.

**Hot Breakfast Cereal** Bring 2 cups water to a boil, add 1 cup quinoa, reduce heat, simmer 5 minutes. Add 1/2 cup of thinly sliced apples, 1/3 cup raisins, 1/2 tsp cinnamon and simmer until water is absorbed. Serve with milk or cream and sweeten to taste with honey or brown sugar.

### Quinoa Pilaf

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1/2 cup chopped onion  
2 carrots, chopped  
1 cup quinoa, rinsed  
2 cups vegetable broth  
3/4 cup chopped walnuts  
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley

**DIRECTIONS:**

Heat oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook onion in oil for 5 minutes, or until translucent. Add carrot, and cook 3 minutes more. Stir in quinoa and vegetable broth, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook 15 to 20 minutes, or until quinoa is tender and fluffy. In a bowl, toss quinoa together with walnuts and parsley. Serve hot or at room temperature.

**Quick Lemon & Garlic Quinoa Salad  
Salad**

1 cup dry quinoa  
8 cups water  
Pinch of sea salt  
1/2 cup carrots, chopped  
1/3 cup parsley, minced  
1/4 cup sunflower seeds

**Dressing**

2-3 cloves garlic, minced  
1/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
2 tablespoons tamari or low-sodium soy sauce

**DIRECTIONS:**

Rinse quinoa with warm water and drain through a fine strainer. Place quinoa in 3-quart pan and dry-roast on low heat (about 5-8 minutes). Stir grains constantly until they begin to change color and give off a nutty aroma. Bring water to boil in a large pot. Add salt and toasted quinoa to boiling water and boil for 10-12 minutes. Remove from heat and drain quinoa through a large strainer (in the same way you would prepare pasta). Add ingredients for the dressing in a large bowl and mix, then add carrots, seeds, and parsley, add cooked quinoa and toss well. Serve at room temperature or chilled