

Americans eat more quinoa than anyone else



Quinoa (kēn'wä) — available almost anywhere, from natural food stores to the bulk food aisles and shelves of major grocery stores — has seen its consumption in the U.S. rise from 600 tons a year to over 37,000 tons in 25 years. Americans now consume more than half of the quinoa grown in the world. That's according to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization.

Versatile, gluten-free, and healthy for you are among its appealing characteristics.

Quinoa is one of the few plants with a protein comprising all nine essential amino acids. They're necessary because your body can't produce them by itself. They must come from a food source. Each protein has a trait and role to play. One is lysine. Its benefits are tissue repair and growth.

Quinoa is a superfood. Its high protein jacks your metabolism and checks your appetite. Its high fiber makes you feel fuller than you might otherwise feel. It's high in antioxidants to zap harmful free radicals. Its list of health benefits goes on, so it's no wonder the ancient Incas of South America called it the food of the gods.

Quinoa cooks quickly. Bring one cup of quinoa in two cups of water or broth to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cover the pot. Cook for up to 20 minutes or until the quinoa absorbs the water.

When done, it appears translucent (clear) because the heat and water cause the grains to grow; you'll see what's similar to a white sprout tail. Another way to test doneness is to taste the quinoa. It should be firm when bitten, al dente like pasta.

You should have approximately three cups of cooked quinoa in your pot. Toss some butter into a cup of warm quinoa for a simple, healthy quick snack. Need more taste? Add a spoonful of sliced almonds and sprinkle it with some cinnamon.

With the quinoa left in the pot, create a side salad. Combine it with diced veggies sautéed in a spoonful of olive oil and cooked over medium heat in a pan on the stove. Sprinkle it with salt and pepper to taste and a favorite Italian seasoning. When done, let it rest awhile before tossing the veggies and quinoa together in a suitable-sized bowl.

Are you pressed for time? Skip the sauté step. Add the diced raw veggies to the quinoa, then drizzle with olive oil, toss, salt, and pepper to taste. *Buon Appetito!*

Quinoa tastes good cold or hot when prepared well. So plain it's almost tasteless, having only a tinge of nuttiness. Chefs dress quinoa with its flavor by cooking it in a broth and adding fresh herbs, seasonings, nuts, dried fruits, veggies, poultry, or fish.

When cooked, a quarter cup of dry quinoa becomes about three-quarters of a cup. Calories in a serving size vary by variety and color from 110 to 220, so read what's on the bulk food bin label or package. Three standard colors are white, red, and black.

Whatever you make with rice, you can make with quinoa, so sub a quinoa pilaf for rice pilaf. Quinoa recipes include snacks, desserts, breakfasts, lunches, suppers, or dinners.

Oct. 16-22 is National Bulk Foods Week, so it's a good time to buy quinoa or other grains — many local grocers will have sales on items in their bulk food aisle. If you have a favorite quinoa recipe you'd like to share, email it to me at rgraf@thespectrum.com.



Cranberry Quinoa Salad Rick Graf / *The Spectrum & Daily News*

Cranberry Quinoa Salad

Serves 6

1½ cups water
1 cup dry white quinoa, rinsed
¼ cup red bell pepper, chopped
¼ cup yellow bell pepper, chopped
1 small red onion, finely chopped
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 tablespoon lime juice
¼ cup sliced almonds
½ cup minced carrots
½ cup dried cranberries
¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped (optional)
salt & pepper to taste

Bring quinoa in water to a boil in a pot on the stove. Reduce heat to medium-low, simmer, and cover the pot. Cook up to 20 minutes or until quinoa absorbs the water.

When done, it appears clear. Fluff it with a fork. You'll see what's similar to a white sprout tail. Test doneness. It should have some firmness when bitten. Once it's cold, stir in bell peppers, onion, curry, almonds, carrots, cranberries, and lime juice—salt and pepper to taste. Chill before serving.

Nutrition per serving

Calories 176 Fat 3.9g Carbs 31.6g Protein 5.4g Cholesterol 0mg Sodium 13mg



Quinoa Cranberry Salad *Rick Graf / The Spectrum & Daily News*

Quinoa Italian Chicken

Serves 6

2 cups chicken broth, low-salt

1 cup white quinoa cooked

2 teaspoons vegetable oil (more if needed)

½ onion chopped

2-4 fresh garlic cloves, chopped

1½ pounds ground chicken

10 oz. can of diced tomatoes with green Chile peppers

14.5 oz. can of diced no-salt tomatoes

¼ cup fresh Italian parsley chopped

1½ tablespoon Italian seasoning

Salt & pepper to taste

Top with fresh Italian parsley leaves (optional) or Parmesan cheese, grated (optional)

Bring broth and quinoa to a boil in a pot on the stove. Reduce heat to medium-low, simmer, and cover the pot. Cook up to 20 minutes or until quinoa absorbs the broth.

When done, it looks clear. Fluff it with a fork. You'll see what's similar to a white sprout tail. Test doneness. It should have some firmness (al dente) when bitten.

Heat oil in a deep-sided skillet over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until the onion looks clear — about 5 minutes. Add chicken. Break into bits while cooking until done, about 10 minutes.

Stir cooked quinoa and diced tomatoes into skillet; bring to a simmer and cook long enough for the flavors to meld, about 10 more minutes. Before serving, set aside to rest.

Nutrition per serving

Calories 280 Fat 7.1g Carbs 22.6g Protein 30.4g Cholesterol 71mg Sodium 663mg

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