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Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Quinoa – The Mother of All Grains

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Quinoa (pronounced Keen-wah) was originally cultivated by the Incas who called it the “mother of all grains.” However – it isn’t actually a grain, but a seed. It has been called a “pseudograin”, though, because it cooks much like a grain. It is often used as an alternative to rice or couscous.



Health Benefits

Quinoa has 12-18% protein content, which is much higher than most grains. It is a good source of dietary fiber and phosphorus and is high in magnesium and iron. Quinoa is gluten-free and considered easy to digest.

Not only is quinoa high in protein, but the protein it supplies is *complete protein*, meaning that it includes all nine essential amino acids. Not only is quinoa's amino acid profile well balanced, making it a good choice for vegans concerned about adequate protein intake, but quinoa is especially well-endowed with the amino acid *lysine*, which is essential for tissue growth and repair. In addition to protein, quinoa features a host of other health-building nutrients. Because quinoa is a very good source of manganese as well as a good source of magnesium, iron, copper and phosphorus, this "grain" may be especially valuable for persons with migraine headaches, diabetes and atherosclerosis.

In comparison with wheat, barley and yellow corn, quinoa was found to be higher in calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, iron, copper, manganese and, zinc and was lower in sodium than the other grains.

Preparation

Before cooking or sprouting, the seeds must be rinsed to remove their bitter resin-like coating, which is called saponin. Commercially produced quinoa is generally rinsed before it is packaged and sold, but it is best to rinse again at home before use to remove any of the powdery residue that may remain on the seeds. The presence of saponin is obvious by the production of a soapy looking "suds" when the seeds are swished in water. Placing quinoa in a strainer and rinsing thoroughly with water easily washes the saponin from the seeds.

Quinoa may be germinated in its raw form to boost its nutritional value. Germination activates its natural enzymes and multiplies its vitamin content. In fact, quinoa has a notably short germination period: Only 2–4 hours resting in a glass of distilled water is enough to make it

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sprout and release gases, as opposed to, e.g., 12 hours overnight with wheat. After soaking for 2-4 hours drain and rinse the seeds twice a day for 2 to 4 days. When the sprouts are about 1 inch long, place them near a window for chlorophyll to develop, which will give them a vibrant green color.



Quinoa can serve as a high-protein breakfast food mixed with honey, almonds, or berries.

Quinoa's flavor is generally regarded as nutty with a texture similar to North American wild rice. The grain has been used in soups, pasta, as puffed cereals, as desserts and side dishes. Its flour works well with wheat flour or grain or corn meal.

References:

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