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Gluten Free Grain Quinoa Gaining Popularity

There is a gluten free grain that is gaining popularity, it's called Quinoa, pronounced KEEN-wah. Quinoa contains more protein than any other grain. It's a complete protein, containing all essential amino acids necessary for good health.

Quinoa was first harvested in Bolivia thousands of years ago. It has a mild flavor and light crunch which makes this gluten free grain a perfect substitute for rice, couscous or pasta. It's even being milled into gluten free flour that can be used in baking or as the base for gluten free pastas, and cereals.

It comes in three color varieties, whole grain white, black and red. Whole grain white is the easiest to find. The tiny, bead-shaped, quinoa cooks like rice and expands to four times its original volume. Its flavor is delicate, almost bland, and may be compared to couscous. While botanically it is not a grain, we cook it and eat it as a grain so you will find it locally packaged as a grain, and found in the baking section or pasta section of most supermarkets.

This super grain is higher in unsaturated fats and lower in carbohydrates than most grains, and provides a rich and balanced source of vital nutrients. In just one fourth cup serving you get 158 calories, 5 grams protein, 30 grams carbohydrates, and 3 grams dietary fiber.

Remember quinoa expands during the cooking process to several times its original size. Store in an airtight container. It will keep for a longer period of time, approximately three to six months, if stored in the refrigerator.

Preparing quinoa is an easy process, but rinsing is essential. Commercial cultivation removes much of the soapy saponins that coat quinoa seeds, however it is still a good idea to thoroughly wash the seeds. An effective method is to run cold water over quinoa that has been placed in a fine-meshed strainer, gently rubbing the seeds together with your hands. To ensure that the saponins have been completely removed, taste a few seeds. If saponins are still on the quinoa, they will have a bitter taste, and you will need to rinse again.

Cooked quinoa will have grains that have become translucent, and the white germ has partially detached itself, appearing like a white-spiraled tail.

Quinoa is versatile and can be used in a breakfast dish similar to rice pudding, or in a vegetable salad, stew or pilaf. Start with the basic recipe and then get creative.

For more information on smart food choices, contact the Monroe County Extension office at 870-747-3397. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Basic Quinoa Recipe

1 cup quinoa
One and one half cups cold water
One fourth tsp salt, optional

Rinse Quinoa. Add cold water, stir the quinoa with your hand, and pour off the rinsing water through a fine mesh strainer. Repeat at least once. Drain rinsed quinoa through a fine strainer. Transfer drained quinoa to the cooking pot, add cold water & salt if desired. Bring quinoa and water to a boil with the lid on (keep a close eye on it), then turn the heat down to simmer. Cook quinoa for 10 - 12 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to sit five minutes with the lid on. Fluff quinoa gently with a fork and serve.

[Whole Grains for Health handout](#)