

# Discovering the Ancient Grain Quinoa

pronounced “KEEN-wah”

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT QUINOA

- ◆ Cultivated in 3000 – 5000 BC by the Incas in Peru
- ◆ Before cultivation, ancient tribes used the leaves and seeds as food
- ◆ Called the “*Mother of all Grains*” because the Incas believed it ensured long life. It was also known to increase stamina of Inca warriors
- ◆ This grain was so sacred the Inca emperor himself would sow the first seeds of the season using tools made of pure gold
- ◆ Technically, quinoa is not really a grain but a fruit of an herb plant
- ◆ Quinoa is grown at high altitudes; above 12,500 feet is the sweetest-tasting
- ◆ Quinoa is a close cousin to tumbleweed, beets and another ancient grain, amaranth
- ◆ Although quinoa is a product grown in the Andes of Bolivia and Peru, the US harvests 200,000 pounds each year from farms in the Rocky Mountains



## QUINOA IS A SUPERFOOD

- ◆ This grain contains all 9 essential amino acids, making it a low-fat, cholesterol-free substitute for meat
- ◆ One cup cooked quinoa has more calcium than 2 cups of milk
- ◆ Quinoa is higher in protein than most grains but less than the protein found in legumes
- ◆ It’s rich in B vitamins, folate, calcium, magnesium, iron, phosphorus, zinc and fiber and is especially high in vitamin E



- ◆ Quinoa has been found to contain higher amounts of powerful polyphenol and quercetin antioxidants than other grains. Antioxidant activity increases with sprouting
  - ◆ It contains small amounts of anti-inflammatory omega 3 fats
- ◆ Quinoa is wheat and gluten-free so it is safe for those on a gluten-free or reduced gluten diet
- ◆ Because of its high protein and fiber content, quinoa has a low glycemic index and is useful in blood sugar control
- ◆ Quinoa contains nearly twice the fiber per serving than other grains. Because of its high soluble fiber, it helps lower LDL cholesterol and risk for heart disease and stroke

## SAPONINS

- ◆ Saponins are natural compounds produced by the plant to resist pests like microbes, fungi and insects.
- ◆ Although saponins may help lower cholesterol, they can also make the grain taste bitter.
- ◆ Rinse quinoa before cooking.



## BUYING QUINOA

- ◆ Quinoa can be bought in packages or in bulk and can be found at most grocery stores or health markets
- ◆ Quinoa is usually cultivated by hand. Since there is less risk of chemical exposure, there is no need to buy organic
- ◆ Quinoa comes in tan, red, brown and black varieties. Darker colors have richer, stronger flavors



## STORING QUINOA

- ◆ Quinoa is considered a “soft grain” since it has a soft outer shell. Therefore, it will not store for centuries like hard grains but will still last years at cool temperatures
- ◆ The healthy unsaturated oil contained within the germ of the grain spoils quickly so store uncooked quinoa in the refrigerator or freezer
- ◆ Cooked quinoa can be frozen in smaller batches. Store in air-tight container and use within 6 months

## EASY TO COOK

- ◆ Quinoa has a mild, nutty flavor and mixes well with most recipes
- ◆ Bulk or home-grown quinoa should be rinsed to remove saponins, but most commercially packaged brands are pre-washed
- ◆ Place 2 cups of water or broth in a pan and bring to boil. Stir in 1 cup quinoa
- ◆ Return to boil, then reduce heat, cover and simmer 15 minutes
- ◆ 1 cup uncooked quinoa makes 3 1/2 to 4 cups cooked



- ◆ When cooked properly, you will see “tails” emerge from the grain
- ◆ Quinoa should not be eaten raw and must be cooked or sprouted before eating
- ◆ This grain can also be ground into flour and used in making muffins, cakes and pasta

### Curry Quinoa

Sauté 1/2 onion, diced, in oil in a skillet 4-5 minutes until soft.

Add 1 cup rinsed quinoa, 1 tsp cinnamon and 1 Tbsp curry powder and cook 1 minute.

Add 1 3/4 cup water or broth and bring to boil. Cover and reduce heat to low, simmer 15 minutes.

Right before serving, stir in one package frozen peas. Cover and cook until peas are tender.

### Quinoa Coconut Bars

Put rinsed quinoa in medium pot and cover with 2 3/4 cups water. Bring to boil, then cover and reduce heat to medium and cook 15-20 minutes.

Chop 1 cup dried apricots, 1 cup dried figs and 1 1/2 cups salted cashews and set aside. Preheat oven to 325°F.

When quinoa is cooked, spoon into a large bowl. Pour in 3/4 cup sweetened condensed milk and 2 cups unsweetened coconut flakes. Stir in fruit and nuts.

Press into a greased 8x8” baking pan and bake 25-30 minutes. Cool completely before cutting into bars.

Try increasing your intake of 100% whole grains by using more *intact grains* in your recipes and meal plans.

Try grains like quinoa, millet, teff, barley, amaranth and steel cut oats.

bobsredmill.com  
choosemyplate.gov  
fao.org

## REFERENCES

oaquinoa.com  
thestonesoup.com  
whfoods.com  
wholegrainscouncil.org