

QUINOA

Rather than concentrating on the color of foods – which I LOVE to do, I thought that this month it might be fun to explore what I would consider a brown or off-white food – Quinoa.

Most often used as and thought of as a grain, quinoa is in fact a relative of green leafy vegetables such as spinach and Swiss chard and can be a great compliment to your more colorful foods as it can help create a satisfying, low fat meal that provides you with good minerals such as magnesium and good vitamins such as B and E.



When we think of “grains” the first one that comes to mind is usually wheat. It is what most of us think of as we think of pasta, breads and cereals. It is important to vary up your sources of starchy carbohydrates and that is where quinoa can be a great option.

In addition to it being a great source of Magnesium and your B-Vitamins as well as a great carbohydrate source quinoa is a better source of Protein relative to grains such as wheat and contains ALL 9 Essential Amino Acids (the building block for proteins) making it a complete protein. Take a look at the numbers - 1 cup of cooked quinoa provides 8grams of Protein relative to 5.5g in oatmeal or 1 cup of white rice which has 4.4grams. So next time you are thinking about a compliment to your color consider adding Quinoa to your meal.

To prepare quinoa, it is really quite simple. If you can make rice you can make quinoa. For each 1 cup of quinoa you will want 1.5 cups of water. I like to add a touch of sea salt. Bring the quinoa, water and salt to a boil, stir it slightly and reduce heat to simmer and cover with a tight fitting lid. Let simmer for 15mins or until soft. Remove from heat and let stand for 5-10mins then fluff with fork. I always like to make more than I know I am going to need for my immediate meal so I can be sure to have leftovers.

You can serve quinoa plain, but you can also use it as a nice base for other creations. Some options: add chopped herbs, nuts, chopped vegetables, or you can add it to your salad, serve your favorite stir-fry over it. One of my favorite ways to use quinoa is as a base for a hot cereal in the morning, with its mild nutty flavor it is a tasty alternative to those empty calorie cold boxed cereals.

Use your left over quinoa, add milk or milk substitute to the pot just enough that you have covered the quinoa that you have, heat over med heat creating a pudding type consistency then I like to add to taste cinnamon, and raisins and a little honey for a great way to start your day!