

Quinoa Pilaf for Nonbelievers

Could we turn this superfood into a dish we'd really want to eat?

➤ BY DAN SOUZA ◀



Using less water than is typical, plus stirring during cooking, delivers fluffy, evenly cooked quinoa.

QUINOA PILAF WITH HERBS AND LEMON

SERVES 4 TO 6

If you buy unwashed quinoa, rinse the grains in a fine-mesh strainer, drain them, and then spread them on a rimmed baking sheet lined with a dish towel and let them dry for 15 minutes before proceeding with the recipe. For more information on quinoa, see page 31. Any soft herbs, such as cilantro, parsley, chives, mint, and tarragon, can be used. For our free recipes for Quinoa Pilaf with Olives, Raisins, and Cilantro and Quinoa Pilaf with Shiitakes, Edamame, and Ginger, go to CooksIllustrated.com/feb14.

- 1½ cups prewashed quinoa
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 2 pieces
- 1 small onion, chopped fine
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1¾ cups water
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

1. Toast quinoa in medium saucepan over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until quinoa is very fragrant and makes continuous popping sound, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer quinoa to bowl and set aside.

2. Return now-empty pan to medium-low heat and melt butter. Add onion and salt; cook, stirring frequently, until onion is softened and light golden, 5 to 7 minutes.

3. Increase heat to medium-high, stir in water and quinoa, and bring to simmer. Cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer until grains are just tender and liquid is absorbed, 18 to 20 minutes, stirring once halfway through cooking. Remove pan from heat and let sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Fluff quinoa with fork, stir in herbs and lemon juice, and serve.

QUINOA PILAF WITH APRICOTS, AGED GOUDA, AND PISTACHIOS

Add ½ teaspoon grated lemon zest, ½ teaspoon ground coriander, ¼ teaspoon ground cumin, and ⅛ teaspoon pepper with onion and salt. Stir in ½ cup dried apricots, chopped coarse, before letting quinoa sit for 10 minutes in step 3. Substitute ½ cup shredded aged gouda; ½ cup shelled pistachios, toasted and chopped coarse; and 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint for herbs.

QUINOA PILAF WITH CHIPOTLE, QUESO FRESCO, AND PEANUTS

Add 1 teaspoon chipotle chile powder and ¼ teaspoon ground cumin with onion and salt. Substitute ½ cup crumbled queso fresco; ½ cup roasted unsalted peanuts, chopped coarse; and 2 thinly sliced scallions for herbs. Substitute 4 teaspoons lime juice for lemon juice.