

healthy eating

# quinoa

This great grain is a super stand-in for pasta, rice—even meat. Dinner's about to get interesting!

BY SARA REISTAD-LONG

## BEYOND THE GRAIN

Quinoa is actually a *pseudocereal*, a word used to describe edible seeds or fruits that can double as grains. Many foods known as ancient grains—amaranth, buckwheat, chia seeds—also belong to this family. Pseudocereals tend to have a better protein-to-carbohydrate ratio than pure grains like wheat, and they're buffered with plenty of fiber, which means you absorb them slowly so your blood sugar stays on an even keel. Quinoa is also gluten-free, and it's richer in nutrients than products made with rice, corn, or potato flour.

## MADE FOR GOING MEAT

Because it contains all nine essential amino acids your body needs, quinoa is one of the few vegetarian foods that counts as a complete protein. Also rich in iron, 1 cup cooked has about 3½ g fat, and it's all omega-3 and monounsaturated—the same fats found in heart-healthy olive oil.

## LIKE BUTTAH

White quinoa is the softest in texture, with an almost buttery flavor.

## BONE BUILDER

Because quinoa is chock-full of magnesium and phosphorus, which are just as important as calcium in preventing osteoporosis, it can play a key role in helping to keep your bones strong.

## THE DARK SIDE

Black quinoa has a slightly sweeter, earthy taste.

## A LITTLE NUTTY

Red quinoa has strong nut notes and holds its shape after cooking, making it great for salads and stir-fries.

## Prep pointers

With its subtle taste, quinoa absorbs sauces and other flavors and works well as an ingredient in main dishes, salads, or sides.

**FIRST RINSE** Dried quinoa is naturally coated with a bitter-tasting compound called saponin, which helps fight off pests. Most packaged varieties have already been rinsed, but give it a quick extra wash to be sure.

**THEN BOIL** Aim for 1 cup quinoa to 2 cups liquid, and simmer, covered, for about 15 minutes. When you see little white tails—the germs of the kernels—sticking out, the quinoa is ready. Drain, if necessary.

**OR TOAST** Cook quinoa in a dry skillet over medium heat until it starts to crackle, then sprinkle over cooked vegetables, add to stir-fries, or serve over greens like arugula and spinach. ■

SOURCES: ZUBIN DAMANIA, M.D., FOUNDER OF TURNTABLE HEALTH IN LAS VEGAS; ARCHELLE GEORGIU, M.D., A HEALTH CARE ADVISER IN MINNEAPOLIS.