Using Quinoa as part high in protein, low GI and reduced fat diet

Quinoa is making a comeback as a "wonder grain." Before going gluten free, most people never heard of quinoa.

Quinoa has been grown in South America for thousands of years and was called the "gold of the Incas." It resembles millet and has a bitter protective saponin coating that protects it from being eaten by birds and insects.

Today, many companies that sell quinoa in the United States remove the bitter saponins. This allows you to prepare the quinoa without having to rinse it first.

Quinoa is gluten-free, you need to research the quinoa you purchase if you want a completely gluten free diet to make sure it has not been processed using the same equipment that may have been used to process wheat, high in fiber and a complete protein, meaning it has all nine amino acids. Quinoa also contains high amounts of lysine, manganese, magnesium, iron, copper and phosphorus. Since it is a complete protein, it is an excellent food choice for the gluten-free vegan and is inexpensive.

Purchase pre-rinsed quinoa or rinse in a strainer until the saponins are removed. Add one part quinoa to two parts liquid in a saucepan, after the mixture is brought to a boil, reduce the heat to simmer and cover. This method usually takes about 15 minutes to prepare, the quinoa become translucent, and the white germ has partially detached itself when it is ready.

Quinoa can be served as a replacement for rice or couscous and is delicious served cold or warm and can be frozen and reheated.

The Incas, who held the crop to be sacred, referred to quinoa as *chisaya mama* or 'mother of all grains', and it was the Inca emperor who would traditionally sow the first seeds of the season using 'golden implements'. During the European conquest of South America quinoa was scorned by the Spanish colonists as 'food for Indians', and even actively suppressed its cultivation, due to its status within indigenous non-Christian ceremonies. In fact, the conquistadors forbade quinoa cultivation for a time and the Incas were forced to grow wheat instead.

Warm and Nutty Cinnamon Quinoa Recipe

Use soy milk in place of low fat milk, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries any fruit you like dried , fresh or frozen may replace the blackberries, dark honey may replace the agave nectar, and walnuts. High in Omega 3's may replace the pecans.

1 cup 1% low fat milk

1 cup water

1 cup quinoa,

2 cups fresh blackberries
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/3 cup chopped pecans, toasted*
4 teaspoons agave nectar,

Combine milk, water and quinoa in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover and simmer 15 minutes or until most of the liquid is absorbed. Turn off heat; let stand covered 5 minutes. Stir in blackberries and cinnamon; transfer to four bowls and top with pecans. Drizzle 1 teaspoon agave nectar over each serving.

Serves 4.

Agave Nectar

Agave makes a good substitute for sugar for a variety of reasons. Agave nectar is a real sugar, as opposed to an artificial or non-nutritive sweetener. It has properties similar to many sugars with one important exception: its glycemic index is significantly lower. This makes it a healthier alternative to many processed AND natural sweeteners, including:

- white granulated sugar
- brown sugar
- demerara or turbinado sugar
- maple sugar crystals
- dehydrated cane juice
- date sugar

Diet Friendly

Agave nectar's low glycemic index makes it suitable for people on a low-carbohydrate diet Granulated sugar has an average glycemic index in the high 60's, while agave generally scores under 30. Foods with a glycemic index lower than 55 are considered low glycemic foods. Foods lower on the scale are less likely to trigger the body's mechanisms for fat storage. While it's not a "free" food for indiscriminate consumption, many individuals on a diet or weight maintenance plan find that agave is a healthier substitute for sugar, and that moderate use of agave nectar can help them enjoy foods that otherwise might be off limits.

Glycemic index from Wikipedia

The glycemic index, or GI is a measure of the effects of carbohydrates on blood sugar levels. Carbohydrates that break down quickly during digestion and release glucose rapidly into the bloodstream have a high GI; carbohydrates that break down more slowly have a low GI. The concept was developed by Dr. David J. Jenkins and colleagues in 1980–1981 at the University of Toronto in their research to find out which foods were best for people with diabetes.

These pages have been researched from a variety of sources including but not limited to the internet, several cookbooks and studies of low fat, low GI diets, print material and my expertise in the culinary field and are based on my opinion.

Matthew Babbage

Certified Chef de Cuisine

babbage-matthew@aramark.com