

## Why I Love Quinoa



**By Julia Chiappetta**

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**Q**uinoa (pronounced KEEN-wah) was once a sacred food to the Incas because it gave their armies a fighting edge.

While you may not be conquering empires on a daily basis, it will give your diet a boost because it is considered a complete vegetarian protein much like dairy. It is nutty and light, and is my daily staple, which I could eat at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

But did you know that quinoa may look like a grain but it is actually a seed—and that it's related to spinach and Swiss chard? This grain crop is grown for its edible seeds. So, for us vegans or vegetarians, quinoa is a lovely seed that enhances all of our meals. Here are some reasons why you should give it a try.

- Quinoa is a complete protein with an amino acid punch.

- Quinoa is rich in nutrients: manganese, iron, magnesium, B-vitamins and fiber.

- Quinoa is proven to help with migraine due to its magnesium and riboflavin, which help relax our muscles.

- Quinoa lessens the risk for heart disease and helps with heart arrhythmias.

- Quinoa contains the building blocks for superoxide dismutase, an antioxidant that helps protect cell from free radical damage.

- Quinoa cooks in less than 20 minutes and is healthier than white rice and most whole grains.

- Quinoa is versatile and has a nice taste.

- Quinoa is gluten-free for those suffering with autoimmune disorders like celiac.

- Quinoa is a great source of the amino acid tryptophan, which helps with melatonin production to improve sleep.

- Quinoa is high in lysine, which helps with tissue repair and the prevention of cold sores.

- Quinoa's magnesium content helps activate 500 enzymes in the body related to insulin secretion and the body's use of sugar.

I like to create dishes around quinoa, add it to my salads, enjoy it in place of oatmeal for breakfast, or as a side dish for dinner. Sometimes I will use my rice cooker for fluffy red or blond quinoa or sautéed on top of the stove with water and spices. There are so many great reasons to add quinoa to your meal plan. Here is one of my favorite recipes, courtesy of Women's Health Magazine, with my added touches:

**Quinoa Salad with Black Beans and Sweet Potatoes** (this recipe makes two side dish servings):

½ Cup Quinoa  
 1 Tbsp. Olive Oil  
 1 Medium Organic Sweet Potato  
 1 Organic Scallion sliced thinly  
 ½ Tsp. Dried Rd Chile Flakes  
 1 Cup Water

½ Tsp. Himalayan Pink Sea Salt  
 ¾ Cup Canned Organic Black Beans, drained and rinsed

Juice of one lime  
 1 Tbsp. Chopped Fresh Cilantro

1. Place quinoa in a small-mesh sleeve and rinse thoroughly.

2. Heat coconut oil over a medium high heat with a tight lid.

Add sweet potato, scallion and Chile flakes and sauté for about two minutes or until fragrant.

3. Add quinoa and toast it for two minutes.

4. Add water and salt.
5. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to medium low and cover.

6. Simmer until quinoa and sweet potato are tender—about 10-12 minutes.

7. If any liquid remains in the pan, raise heat to boil off.

8. Stir in black beans, lime juice and serve warm with sprinkled cilantro.

350 calories & 11 grams protein per serving

As always, try to take time today to help someone else and enjoy how this act of kindness can soothe your soul; try to eat something green and organic to get nutrients in for healing and find time to meditate and pray, giving thanks for all of the amazing blessings we witness each day if we are quiet enough to see and hear them.

*Julia Chiappetta is the author of "Breast Cancer: The Notebook" (Gemini Media, 2006) and is also the owner of Julia Chiappetta Consulting. She lives in Cos Cob.*