

# SPOTLIGHT ON QUINOA

STORY & PHOTO BY KAREN BOSSICK

It's a species of goosefoot, a pseudocereal rather than a true cereal, a chenopod closely related to beets, spinach and—yes—tumbleweeds. Originating in the Andes of Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia and Peru, it was revered by the Incas, who considered it sacred and called it the “mother of all grains.”

And quinoa (pronounced keen-wah) is something that Kat Vanden Heuval has fallen in love with.

“My husband and I fell in love with it on backpacking trips because it gave us what we needed in the way of protein,” said the Hailey woman.

In fact, quinoa has not only the most protein of any grain but it's a source of complete protein. It's also a good source of dietary fiber, phosphorus, magnesium, iron and calcium, making it a godsend for vegans, those following a gluten-free diet and those who are lactose intolerant.

Vanden Heuval, who works for The Hunger Coalition, paired up with Kathryn Guylay of Nurture—a non-profit organization offering nutrition education—last week to present a workshop spotlighting quinoa.

“It's important to get protein in every meal, especially with kids,” Guylay said. “Protein regulates blood sugar.”

Boxed quinoa has been pre-rinsed; non-boxed quinoa needs to be rinsed for several minutes. Cook it like rice, bringing two cups of water to boil with one cup of grain and simmering it for another 10 to 15 minutes. The cooked germ looks like a tiny curl.

You can use it in place of oats for a breakfast food, slow cooking it overnight into an apple pie porridge with apples, nuts, raisins, honey and other goodies.

Or try it as a main meal with a Tex-Mex flavor (see recipe below) or Indian-flavored meal with curry.

It cooks fast in a slow cooker, turning easily to mush. So, for best results, cook broth, veggies and protein on low for six to seven hours, then add the quinoa at the end and turn to high for one to two hours, advised Guylay.



Kathryn Guylay fields questions during a Healthy Eating workshop put on by The Hunger Coalition and Nurture.

Other tidbits that came out of the workshop:

- Oats in this country are cross-pollinated with wheat. So, if you're a true celiac, you can't eat oats.

- Corn is not a vegetable—it's a grain.

- A half-cup of orange juice has 22 grams of sugar, contrasted with a Snicker's bar, which has 29 grams of sugar. The sugar in orange juice is not necessarily bad, said Guylay, since it is a naturally occurring sugar. But it's something to keep in mind. “Raisin bran contains more sugar than bran, but it's a naturally occurring sugar from raisins,” she said.

- For a low-sugar treat, try a Kashi TLC cookie, which has 8 grams of sugar—just a tidbit more than a serving of strawberries. A Cinnabon, by contrast, has 55 grams of sugar. “You don't have to ban treats—just eat everything in moderation,” Guylay said.

- Those who believe they're going to get healthier on a gluten-free diet may find their insulin levels raising because of the use of substitutes like potato starch. High insulin levels can be a precursor to diabetes.

- You can substitute coconut oil for butter in recipes like apple crisp for someone who's allergic to milk.

- An easy way to remind kids

how many fruits and vegetables they need a day is to have them “Gimme Five.” MyPlate suggests three vegetables versus two fruits because vegetables are more nutrient-dense.

- Get more healthy recipes at [nutureyourfamily.org](http://nutureyourfamily.org) or [healthykidsideas.com](http://healthykidsideas.com)

## RECIPE

### Tex-Mex Quinoa

1 C. uncooked quinoa, rinsed  
2 cans black beans, drained and rinsed

2 C. diced tomatoes (or 1 C. tomatoes plus 1 C. salsa)

2 to 3 bell peppers, washed and chopped

Chopped spinach, optional  
1/2 onion, chopped

3 to 4 C. chicken or veggie broth

1 to 2 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 or more tsp. chili powder

1/2 tsp. or more cumin  
Salt and pepper

Jalapeño peppers or Tabasco sauce, optional

Shredded cheese, optional

Combine everything except quinoa and cheese. Cook in slow cooker on low for seven hours. About one and one-half hour before serving, add quinoa and turn to high. The quinoa's done when you see little white tails. Add cheese right before serving, unless you're going dairy-free.