

## Quinoa

### Features & Benefits:

Quinoa is the seed of a plant known scientifically as *Chenopodium quinoa*. It is higher in nutrients than most grains and is often marketed as a “**superfood**.”

Although quinoa (pronounced *KEEN-wah*) is prepared and consumed like a cereal grain, it’s categorized as a pseudocereal, as it doesn’t grow on grass like wheat, oats, and rice. It’s also related to beetroot and spinach.

In ancient times, Incan soldiers were said to do battle fortified by a diet of quinoa and fat.

In 1993, NASA declared quinoa the perfect food to sustain astronauts on long-term space missions, due to its **high protein and amino acid** composition.

Quinoa has a crunchy texture and nutty flavour. It’s also **gluten-free** and can therefore be enjoyed by people who are sensitive to gluten or wheat.

Quinoa seeds are flat, oval, and usually pale yellow, though the **colour can range from pink to black**. Its **taste can vary from bitter to sweet**.

It’s usually boiled and can be added to salads, used to thicken soups and stews, or eaten as a side dish or breakfast porridge. It can also be used in seed sprinkles, energy bars and veggie burgers.

**The seeds can also be sprouted, ground and used as flour, or popped like popcorn. Quinoa is an excellent food for babies.**

The United Nations declared 2013 “The International Year of Quinoa” due to the seeds’ potential to contribute to worldwide food security.

Though quinoa technically isn’t a grain, it’s still considered a whole-grain food, according to the Whole Grains Council.

Quinoa has a relatively **low glycemic index** (GI) score of 53, which means it may not cause a rapid spike in blood sugar.

Quinoa is high in fibres – mostly insoluble fibres, which reduce the risk of diabetes, improve gut health and cut your risk of disease. By dry weight, quinoa provides 16% protein. Quinoa is considered a **complete protein** source, which means that it **provides all nine essential amino acids**.

**Quinoa is a good source of several minerals, including manganese, phosphorus, copper, folate, iron, magnesium, and zinc.**

Quinoa is high in many plant compounds, especially antioxidants. Some of the undesirable plant compounds can be eliminated by soaking, washing, or roasting prior to cooking.

**Quinoa may reduce blood cholesterol, blood sugar, and triglycerides. It’s weight loss friendly, gluten-free, and has been shown to increase the nutrient and antioxidant value of gluten-free diets.**

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