

RED QUINIOA DOLMAS WITH COLLARD GREENS AND ORANGE JUICE VINAIGRETTE

Quinoa, often mispronounced as Qui-NOAH, (the correct pronunciation is KEEN-wah), is considered a super grain because of its stellar nutritional profile. The United Nations World Health Organization notes that quinoa contains 22 grams of protein, 50% more than any other grain. And, unlike other grains, quinoa is a complete protein with an essential amino acid profile that rivals milk.

Other nutritional perks are quinoa's high levels of iron, phosphorus, B-vitamins, vitamin E and lysine, an amino acid that is very scarce in the plant kingdom. Those that have trouble with wheat or other glutinous grains can also turn to quinoa because it is so easy to digest and it is gluten-free.

"If I had to choose one food to survive on, quinoa would be the best," says Duane Johnson, Ph.D., new crops agronomist at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Unlike other grains, quinoa is actually a seed and has a dual flavor and texture. About the size of millet, quinoa's tiny disk-shape is encircled with a narrow germ or embryo. When cooked, the germ separates from the seed, forming curlicue-shaped tails. The result is a soft and airy grain akin to couscous juxtaposed by a nutty crunch derived from the thin germ circlet.

Quinoa's unique texture is also what gives it its nutritional superiority to other grains. The germ of any grain is where most of the protein, vitamins and minerals are located. In most grains however, the germ is but a mere speck, whereas quinoa is completely encircled by its germ. This extra large germ is what give quinoa its protein power.

With such an impressive list of healthy qualities, it is a wonder how this amazing grain was ever overlooked. Quinoa can literally grow anywhere, in any climate, under any circumstance. It actually flourishes under extreme weather, high altitudes, hot sun, radiation, drought, frost, and poor soil.

Quinoa originated throughout the Andes region and was first cultivated 8,000 years ago by the Incas. It was a staple of the Inca culture that was highly revered and regarded as the sacred mother grain. Every year the Inca ruler would plant the first quinoa seed with a golden spade.

Collard greens are part of the cabbage family and has a nutritional content similar to kale (the grandmother of the cabbage family). Both kale and collard greens are noted for being cancer protective foods. A dark and vibrant green, collards are loaded with chlorophyll, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C and "stand out as a nutritional superstar". They are high in lutein and zeaxanthin, which protect the eyes from macular degeneration, and indol-3-carbinol, which may help protect against colon cancer.

Research has shown that the organosulfur compounds in collards and other brassicas appear to lessen the occurrence of many different types of cancers, including ovarian and breast cancers. These sulfur containing compounds, glucosinolates and cysteine sulfoxides activate detoxifying enzymes in the liver that help neutralize potentially carcinogenic substances. Brassica vegetables are often included in cleansing and detox programs because of their effectiveness in boosting the body's detoxification enzymes. Research scientist confirm this saying that the sulforaphane in collards and other brassicas not only facilitate detoxification, they have the potential to alter gene expression and help clear potentially carcinogenic substances more quickly. The compound sulforaphane is formed when cruciferous vegetables such as collards are chopped or chewed. According to research, chopping or chewing those dark leafy greens triggers the liver to produce

enzymes that detoxify cancer-causing chemicals, inhibits chemical-induced breast cancer in animal studies, induces colon cancer cells to commit suicide, and in laboratory studies, have demonstrated an ability to stop the proliferation of breast cancer cells, even in the later stages of growth.

CAULIFLOWER MOUSSE WITH CARROT CURRY VINAIGRETTE

Cauliflower is another member of the brassica family and originated in Crete or Cyprus. Though it is similar to broccoli, it contains slightly lower amounts of vitamins, minerals, and chlorophyll. It is also considered a good brain food. Like other brassicas (see collard greens above) many enzymes found in cauliflower help with the detoxification process. These enzymes include glutathione transferase, glucuronosyl transferase, and quinine reductase. Both animal and human studies show increased detoxification enzyme levels from diets high in cruciferous vegetables containing glucosinolates.

Carrots are known scientifically as *Daucus carota*, a name that can be traced back to ancient Roman writing of the third century. Carrots belong to the Umbelliferae family along with parsnips, fennel, caraway, cumin, and dill, which all have the umbrella-like flower clusters that characterize this family of plants.

Carrots are an excellent source of antioxidant compounds and the richest vegetable source of the pro-vitamin A carotenes. Carrots antioxidant compounds help protect against cardiovascular disease and cancer and also promote good vision, especially night vision.

Carrots are by far one of the richest source of carotenoids-just one cup provides 16,679 IUs of beta-carotene and 3,432 REs (retinol equivalents), or roughly 686.3% the RDA for vitamin A. High carotenoid intake has been linked with a 20% decrease in postmenopausal breast cancer and an up to 50% decrease in the incidence of cancers of the bladder, cervix, prostate, colon, larynx, and esophagus. Extensive human studies suggest that a diet including as little as one carrot per day could conceivably cut the rate of lung cancer in half.

FRESH VEGETABLE SPRING ROLLS WITH ALMOND DIPPING SAUCE

Red Peppers, are a variety of bell peppers known as sweet peppers. They are like the Christmas ornaments of the vegetable world since they are beautifully shaped, glossy in appearance and come in a variety of vivid colors such as green, red, yellow, orange, purple, brown and black. Despite their varied palette, all are the same plant, known scientifically as *Capsicum annuum*, and are members of the nightshade family, which also includes potatoes, tomatoes and eggplant. Like their relatives, the chili peppers, bell peppers originated in South America with seeds of a wild variety dating back to 5000 BC.

Bell peppers are rich sources of some of the best nutrients available. To start, peppers are excellent sources of vitamin C and vitamin A (through its concentration of carotenoids such as beta-carotene), two very powerful antioxidants. These antioxidants work together to effectively neutralize free radicals, which can travel through the body causing huge amounts of damage to cells. Free radicals are major players in the build up of cholesterol in the arteries that leads to atherosclerosis and heart disease, the nerve and blood vessel damage seen in diabetes, the cloudy lenses of cataracts, the joint pain and damage seen in osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, and the wheezing and airway tightening of asthma. By providing these two potent free radical destroyers, bell peppers may help prevent or reduce some of the symptoms of these conditions by shutting down the source of the problem.

Cucumbers high water content gives it a very unique moist and cooling taste, hence the apropos phrase, “cool as a cucumber”. The flesh of the cucumber is composed mainly of water but it also contains ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and caffeic acid, both of which help soothe skin irritations and reduce swelling. Cucumbers' hard skin is rich in fiber and contains a variety of beneficial minerals including silica, potassium and magnesium.

The silica in cucumber is an essential component of healthy connective tissue, which includes muscles, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, and bone. Cucumber juice is often recommended as a source of silica to improve the complexion and health of the skin, plus cucumber's high water content makes it naturally hydrating—a must for glowing skin. Cucumbers are also used topically for various types of skin problems, including swelling under the eyes and sunburn. Two compounds in cucumbers, ascorbic acid and caffeic acid, prevent water retention, which may explain why cucumbers applied topically are often helpful for swollen eyes, burns and dermatitis.

Trying to get adequate dietary fiber on a daily basis is a challenge for many Americans. Adding a crunchy cool cucumber to your salads is an especially good way to increase your fiber intake because cucumber comes naturally prepackaged with the extra fluid you need when consuming more fiber. Plus, you get the added bonus of vitamin C, silica, potassium and magnesium.

Mint is both a culinary and medicinal herb. Its fragrance alone refreshes the palette and all other senses. Two of the most common varieties of mint are peppermint and spearmint. Although often used interchangeably, peppermint is the more cooling and stimulating of the two herbs.

The pungent menthol flavor of mint helps disperse pathogens such as viruses or bacteria and invigorates by promoting circulation of energy, blood, and lymph. These properties make mint a useful ingredient for many herbal remedies, especially where there is excessive heat, such as mastitis, painful menstruation, and hives. Mint can also help relieve spasms, increase perspiration, and tones the digestive system, especially the colon.

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