05/02/12 - Quinoa Pilaf for Spring

Quinoa is a relatively new kitchen staple in my home. The healthy aspects, the fact that it is good cold or hot, kosher, dairy free, usable on Passover, and pairs well with many vegetables or any protein makes it very appealing. Did you know quinoa is not a grain but a seed and is gluten free as well.

Over the weekend my sister mentioned about the outer coating of saponin which needs to be washed off before use. I was unaware of this or even the word. On straight raw quinoa this outer layer of a saponin makes the taste a little nasty and thus keeps the seeds unpalatable to birds and bugs. Saponins are a class of naturally occurring chemical compounds which foam up when wet and are soap like. Most commercially available quinoa has had the saponin removed; however it is better to rinse quinoa before use.

For this recipe I found a tri-color quinoa at Trader Joe's, but use any quinoa you prefer. After a visit to the Farm Market in Santa Monica I decided to use the beautiful fresh multi-colored carrots, fragrant garlic chives, and corn so fresh, the corn silk was pale translucent green. Tables piled high with fresh fava beans

Quinoa Pilaf for Spring

Serves 4 to 8

1 cup tri color quinoa

2 cups water

1 extra large onion

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and fresh cracked pepper

4 small heirloom colored carrots

2 ears fresh corn, shucked

1/ 2 cup shelled and peeled fava beans (fresh Lima beans work well or fresh peas)

4 large garlic chives

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 cups wild arugula

2/3 cups roasted and shelled pistachios

Salt and fresh cracked pepper

1-2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice

Rinse and drain quinoa. Place quinoa in a medium saucepan with water, cover and place over medium high heat. Quinoa cooks like rice. Bring it to a boil and turn temperature down to low until quinoa is cooked and liquid is absorbed, around 15 minutes.

In the meantime, peel onion, slice in half and then, slice thin half circles. Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat, add oil, add onion, and sauté until onion is caramelized. Season onion with salt and pepper and set aside.

Wash carrots, but do not peel as the vibrant colors are mostly in a thin surface layer. Dice carrots into small pieces. Wash and thinly slice chives. Place a medium sauté pan over medium high heat, add oil. Sauté chives, corn kernels, carrots and lima beans until colors have brightened and they are barely cooked.

Transfer cooked quinoa to a large serving bowl. Mix in arugula, caramelized onion, and sautéed vegetables. Give a couple of squeezes of fresh lime juice and garnish pilaf with toasted pistachios.I served this quinoa as a side dish at Shabbat dinner

along with whole barbecued chicken, grilled asparagus, grilled fresh ears of corn,

A note about fava beans, first remove beans from the large pods and then blanch and peel the second layer of skin off of each bean. I think you can find them frozen

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