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### Setting the record straight on Quinoa (Frequently Asked Questions about Quinoa) (press release)

by Mike Adams

What is quinoa (keen-wa)?

Quinoa is a seed grain that was a staple food of the Incas in South America. The majority of it is grown at high altitude in the mountains of Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru. It's the only vegetable source of protein recognized as complete with all the essential amino acids needed for growth and development. It's also a good source of iron, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, vitamins B6 and E, and can be an excellent source of fiber. It cooks in 15 minutes and can be used like rice or couscous in salads, stews, soup, stir-fries, pilafs, or as a cereal. Quinoa is gluten free. The flour is an excellent substitute for wheat flour in quick breads or baked goods that don't use yeast like cakes or cookies.

Do you have to store quinoa in the refrigerator?

No, quinoa stores easily in a dry kitchen cabinet. Unlike many whole grains that get rancid (off-flavored) quickly, it has a long shelf life of several years. This could be because of the high vitamin E content that acts as an antioxidant. The oil in quinoa does not develop an off flavor.

Do you have to wash or rinse quinoa before cooking and eating?

All quinoa has a bitter-tasting coating on each seed that protects it from being eaten by birds in the field. This is called saponin and must be removed before it is cooked and eaten. When quinoa was first exported from South America in the 1980's, the saponin was not cleaned off well and it was important to wash it before cooking. Today the cleaning is more thorough either by polishing or pre-washing so that the consumer does not have to wash or rinse it although many people do just to be sure.

Is all quinoa whole grain?

There is a whole grain quinoa produced by Inca Organics in Ecuador that is available in the US, England, and Australia. It is washed in a 3-step operation that thoroughly cleans the bitter saponin from the quinoa without removing any of the vital nutrients. It is then dried to a specific humidity and is ready to eat with no further rinsing. All other quinoa that is grown in Peru and Bolivia is mechanically polished by abrasion to take off the saponin. This produces a saponin powder that is used as an emulsifier in the pharmaceutical industry. The leftover quinoa is then sold as the grain quinoa; but is not a whole grain. The polishing makes it a refined grain like white rice, white flour, or pearled barley. It is lower in protein, vitamins, and minerals and has half the dietary fiber as whole grain quinoa.

Is all quinoa the same?

No, only quinoa grown in Ecuador by Inca Organics is cleaned by the unique washing method and not polished. Inca Organics quinoa is, therefore, the only whole grain quinoa on the market in the US, England and Australia. All other quinoa is polished to remove the bitter taste; but this polishing also removes many of the vital nutrients and makes it a refined grain.

- <http://www.incaorganics.com>