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A Fresh Take on the New Side-Dish Staple: Quinoa

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Quinoa Salad with fresh peas, carrots, mushrooms, and arugula in lemon vinaigrette. Photo Susie Iventosch

veggies, along with julienned arugula, oyster mushrooms and grated Pecorino Romano, all tossed in a tangy lemon-dijon vinaigrette. We also tossed in some bite-sized pieces of leftover grilled chicken, which made it a little heartier for lunch.

The assortment of textures was really fun with the crunchy veggies and al dente quinoa. You really could add just about any vegetable that pleases your palate! You can also use whatever nuts you like best, such as toasted almonds or pecans. Or, you can run over to these restaurants and give their versions a try!

Red Quinoa Salad with Chicken and Lemon-Dijon Vinaigrette

(Serves 4 for lunch)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups red quinoa, rinsed through a fine mesh sieve
- 3 cups chicken broth (or water)
- 2 small carrots, cut into matchstick pieces
- 2 shallots, finely sliced
- 1 cluster of oyster mushrooms, use small ones whole, and slice larger mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 12 or so, pea pods, sliced into 1/4 inch strips (some of the peas will fall out and you want those, too)
- 1/2 cup finely julienned arugula
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino Romano (or crumbled feta cheese)
- 1/2 cup walnut pieces, toasted
- 1 cooked chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces

My family has become a big fan of quinoa lately. We usually serve it as a side dish, either plain like rice, or as a pilaf, with mushrooms and onions. It seems that most restaurants serve quinoa on their menus nowadays, and it can be on the breakfast menu served with eggs, as a side dish, or as a stand-alone salad. Just last week we had lunch at Zut! in Berkeley and ordered a red quinoa dish made with maitake mushrooms, parsnips, carrots, Pecorino, crème fraiche and sautéed greens. It was fabulous! Then two days later, we enjoyed lunch at Metro in Lafayette and once again, I ordered the delicious Organic Quinoa and Spring Vegetable Salad with walnuts and lemon vinaigrette. It was made with fresh peas and slices of snap pea pods, and I am not sure what other veggies, but it was excellent.

A few days later I made a salad combining these two dishes and it turned out great. I used red quinoa and a combination of fresh and sautéed

Lemon wedges for garnish

DIRECTIONS

In a pot, bring chicken broth (or water) to a boil. Add quinoa and bring back to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer until liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat and cool.

In a sauté pan, heat olive oil. Add carrots, shallots and mushrooms and sauté until slightly browned, but still al dente. Remove from heat and cool.

Add sautéed veggies to quinoa, along with all remaining ingredients. Toss with lemon-dijon vinaigrette and serve cold or at room temperature over a bed of lettuce or finely sliced cabbage. Drizzle any extra dressing over entire dish and serve lemon wedges for extra zest!

Lemon-Dijon Vinaigrette

Juice of one lemon

4 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1/3 cup (add more if needed) extra-virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Place all ingredients in a container and shake well.

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