

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

August 29, 2010

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

Ph: (813)744-5519 x 136, FAX: 744-5776

e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu

Really, Really Old Flour?

You may have seen various ads or articles about 'ancient' grains, or breads and cereals made of 'ancient' grains. Did you think that maybe they've dug up some old wheat from the pyramids or something? Hopefully they're not selling some old, moldy stuff! So what do they mean by 'ancient' grains? What is all the fuss about?

'Ancient grains' simply refers to the kinds of grain people have been using, in some part of the world, for hundreds or thousands of years. Some were the staples of the diet in Africa, parts of Asia, or South America. Each has its own distinct flavor and texture. Some need different cooking styles than others. As wheat and rice became more popular around the world many of these grains were grown less and less. Now they're becoming popular again as people rediscover their flavors, or as they are promoted as being more nutritious or better for us. None have any gluten so people with celiac disease or wheat allergy can eat them safely.

Which grains are considered 'ancient'? There's amaranth. It's not technically a grain although the seeds are eaten like grains. They are tiny, round, brown or red, and grow as a loose cluster that can weigh as much as a couple of pounds. Some varieties grow wild as weeds, but the food-types are commercially cultivated in South America, Asia and Africa. It is toasted like popcorn, mixed with honey and eaten almost like a rice crisp treat, or boiled or ground into flour. It has more calories, protein, fat and fiber than wheat, more of some of the B vitamins, magnesium and sodium.

Millet is similar. You've probably seen millet. It's the little round seeds in bird

seed. That's what its most common use has been in the US, although around the world it is used to make everything from noodles to beer. The seeds are slightly larger and can be various shades of brown from creamy pale to dark almost red. Millet is usually toasted first until you can smell the flavor. Then it's ready to boil. It can be served like rice, soupy like wet cereal, or as thick as mashed potatoes. It has about the same calories, protein and carbohydrates as wheat, but a lot more fat and fiber. It also has a lot more of the B vitamins and magnesium.

Many people, especially Southerners, immediately think of molasses when they think of sorghum. Making syrup from sorghum sap is not surprising when you know that it is related to sugar cane. But it has many other uses around the world, from flour to beer and fermented liquors. Now sorghum flour is being added to cereals and baked goods here in the US. It has more calories, fiber and fat than whole wheat flour, a little bit more protein, more B vitamins and most minerals.

Quinoa is another one that is often called an 'ancient' grain from Peru. It's not really a grain, but is more related to spinach. And the varieties we use today are newer varieties too, not the old ones the Andean people used. They were too bitter, had to be carefully cleaned and could be toxic if they weren't. What we buy in boxes has all ready been carefully cleaned, rinsed and dried to make it safe. The whole grains can be cooked like rice. Or flakes can be eaten like cereal. It has more calories, protein, fat and fiber, less carbohydrate than wheat flour. It does have more B vitamins and E, but its main claim to fame is its very high potassium content.

Teff is the final 'ancient' grain. The seeds are really tiny but can be ground to make flour. In Ethiopia teff flour is used to make something like a crepe that is eaten

with most meals. It can be boiled until thick like pudding, or the flour can be mixed with other flours in cereals and bread mixes. It has a more fat and fiber than wheat flour, and like the others has more vitamins and minerals than wheat does.

Here's an easy dessert made with quinoa. Give it a try for sweet end to a meal.

Quinoa Banana Pudding

1 ½ cups water	¾ cup dry quinoa
2 cups milk	2 ripe bananas, mashed
2 Tbsp sugar or sweetener	1 tsp margarine
1 Tsp vanilla extract	pinch of salt optional

Rinse the quinoa in a sieve, drain and put in saucepan with the water. Bring to boil, cover and reduce heat, simmer 15 minutes. Blend milk, banana, sugar (and salt if using) in small bowl. Remove quinoa from heat and stir in the milk mixture. Return to heat and simmer 15 minutes more until thick and creamy. Remove from heat, stir in butter and vanilla. Serve warm. Serves 4.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida. The Institute of Food And Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Employment Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with regard to race, creed, color, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M., University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating.