

Holiday Salad

Quinoa makes a great salad base because it tends to absorb the flavors of ingredients around it. It's rich in fiber and contains all nine amino acids, making it a complete protein. Pomegranate seeds add vitamin C and health-promoting polyphenols, which may play a role in reducing inflammation. Apples, mint and a citrus dressing top off a colorful and flavorful dish for the holidays.

Holiday Quinoa Salad

3/4 cup quinoa

1³/₄ cups water

3/4 tsp. kosher or sea salt, divided

1/2 medium Fuji apple, cored and finely chopped

1/2 cup fresh pomegranate seeds

1/3 cup finely chopped cilantro

1/4 cup finely chopped fresh mint

1/4 cup finely chopped flat-leaf parsley

1/3 cup finely chopped scallions, green and white parts

1/4 cup blood orange juice, or orange juice plus 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Freshly ground pepper

2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

Rinse quinoa in strainer, drain well, and place moist grain in heavy, medium saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with wooden spatula until grains stick to bottom of pot and then start to move freely and smell toasty, about 5 minutes. When grains of quinoa start to pop, move pot off heat and pour in 1³/₄ cups water, standing back as it will splatter. Immediately return pot to heat and reduce heat to medium. Add 1/4 teaspoon salt, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes, or until quinoa is almost tender. Off heat, let grain sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Using fork, fluff quinoa, and transfer it to mixing bowl. There will be about 2 1/4 cups cooked quinoa.

Let quinoa sit until it is room temperature. Add apple, pomegranate seeds, cilantro, mint, parsley, and scallions to grain and, using a fork, mix to combine them.

In small bowl, whisk orange juice, or two citrus juices, with remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt until it dissolves. Add 4-5 grinds pepper, then whisk in oil. Pour dressing over salad and toss with fork to distribute it evenly. Serve within 2 hours. The quinoa and dressing parts of this salad can be made up to 8 hours ahead, then covered and refrigerated separately and combined shortly before serving.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 179 calories, 4 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 32 g carbohydrate, 5 g protein, 3 g dietary fiber, 366 mg sodium.