



Healthier Eating



Flavorful, Nutritious And Versatile: Enjoying The Goodness Of Grains

(NAPSA)—With one look down the grocery store aisle or a quick glance at a restaurant menu, it's clear that whole-grain options are popping up everywhere. From quinoa to buckwheat and farro to freekeh, the number of grain possibilities is growing, leaving home cooks and diners puzzled by how to choose the right one and know how to prepare it.

Not only do whole grains provide an array of health benefits, but they can also be an excellent base for hearty dishes that taste great and are remarkably filling. Whether featured in a salad, formed into a patty as a vegetarian burger option, warmed up for breakfast, or used as the base of a thick stew, grains are extremely versatile and can be enjoyed as part of breakfast, lunch, dinner or dessert.

"Chefs are always looking for creative ways to bring their cooking to the next level, and thanks to the versatility of grains, chefs can use them in countless ways to bring new twists to classic dishes," says Chef Kirk Bachmann, president of Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Chicago. "At Le Cordon Bleu, we educate our students on a range of trendy and classic ingredients and teach them the skills and techniques to create delicious yet wholesome meals."

Although cooking with grains can seem like a daunting task, the chef instructors at Le Cordon Bleu encourage home cooks to soak their long-cooking grains, whether for a few hours or overnight, to minimize the cooking time. This also ensures that any resin left on the grain that can cause a bitter taste will get washed off.

The chef instructors at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts share the following tips for choosing and preparing whole grains:

- Whole-grain options can be customized for each meal of the day. Make a big batch of steel-cut oats on Sunday evening and eat it for breakfast throughout the week. Add quinoa to lunchtime



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salads—add the dressing in advance so the grain fully absorbs the flavors of the dish. For dinner, add wheat berries or barley to soups for a hearty, filling meal.

- Resist the urge to stir grains as they are cooking. Stirring causes whole grains, especially rice, to become sticky and clump together, making it difficult to prepare a fluffy, flavorful dish.

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"If you're looking for more creative ways to incorporate grains into your cooking or want to sharpen your skills in the kitchen, I suggest attending the Le Cordon Bleu-Bleu Ribbon Kitchen workshops," says Chef Bachmann. "They're offered at our campuses around the country, and foodies can step inside our kitchens and learn from Le Cordon Bleu chef instructors."

Meanwhile, you may care to try this recipe:

Quinoa Spinach Soufflé

Ingredients:

Olive oil cooking spray

Bread crumbs

1 lb. spinach leaves

2 tsp. olive oil

1 yellow onion, peeled and diced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced

1 Tbsp. picked fresh thyme leaves

1 tsp. finely chopped fresh rosemary

¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

2 cups cooked quinoa (1 cup uncooked quinoa), made according to package directions

1 cup cottage cheese

¼ tsp. freshly ground black pepper

½ cup Parmesan cheese

2 large eggs, lightly beaten

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°. Spray an 8-by-8-inch glass baking dish with olive oil spray. Coat dish with bread crumbs and set aside. Fill a large bowl with ice and water and set aside. Bring a medium pot of water to a boil and add spinach. Blanch until bright green, about 10–12 seconds, and immediately transfer to ice bath. When spinach is cold, remove from ice bath, squeeze out all water and finely chop; set aside.

In a medium sauté pan, heat olive oil and add onion, garlic, thyme, rosemary and red pepper flakes. Sauté until translucent and remove from heat; transfer to a medium bowl.

Add spinach, quinoa, cottage cheese, pepper, Parmesan cheese and eggs to the onion mixture and stir until combined. Pour the mixture into the baking dish and place in the oven. Bake until set and edges are brown, 60 to 70 minutes. Slice and serve warm or at room temperature.

To learn more about Le Cordon Bleu and check out upcoming workshops, visit www.chefs.edu.