

Amaranth (Grains and Seeds)

Interesting facts: Name "amaranth" is derived from a Greek word "amarantos" which means "everlasting" or "one that does not wither". Name refers to the flower buds of amaranth that retain vivid coloration even after drying. Amaranth can be ground in flour and used for the preparation of bread or as thickener for soups, sauces and stews. Seeds can be prepared and consumed like rice, as ingredient of granola bars or popped like popcorns. Seeds of amaranth are gluten-free and they can be safely consumed by people diagnosed with celiac disease. Considered an ancient grain, amaranth is a great source of nutrition. It has high fiber at 15%, high protein at 14% and can be used in many ways.

How to prepare and cook: Before cooking grains, soak them in pure water overnight then rinse them thoroughly. To cook the grain, combine it with water in a heavy steel pot. Do not use aluminum cookware. You may add a pinch of salt, ghee, oil or spices. Bring the grain to a boil, cover the pot, reduce heat, and simmer without stirring until the water is absorbed. Remove from heat and allow the grain to stand, still covered, for ten minutes before serving.

For rice texture: Use 1 cup of amaranth and 2 cups of water or broth. Cook for 20 minutes. Yields 2 cups.

For hot cereal texture: Use 1 cup of grain and 2 ½ to 3 cups of water. Cook for 20 minutes. Yields 2 ½ to 3 cups. An easy way to make whole grain cereal for breakfast is to place the grain in boiling water in a thermos the night before. The cereal will be ready to eat in the morning with all the nutrients intact.

Note: You can use amaranth flour instead of wheat in most recipes. You may need to use a binder to make the baked product stick together and you may need to add more water.

Recipe idea:

Cereal: Use a ratio of 1 1/2 cups liquid to 1/2 cup amaranth. (Yield: 1 1/2 cups cooked.) Place amaranth and water or apple juice in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Serve in a bowl and top with nuts and fresh fruit.