

Vegetarian/Vegan/Gluten-Free Quinoa Salad

Prep: 10 mins

Cook: 15 mins

Total: 25 mins

Servings: 4 to 6 servings

This quinoa salad made with cucumber, bell peppers, broccoli, and tomatoes gets a hint of brightness from a lemon-garlic vinaigrette. The rest of the good news? It's delicious, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and takes about 30 minutes to prepare.

There's a lot to love about quinoa—it has about 11 grams of protein per cup cooked and has iron, magnesium, and fiber.¹ It can be prepared faster than most other grains which add up to a win-win for busy lifestyles.

This recipe lends itself to experimentation so try adding or swapping out different veggies such as zucchini, corn, kale, or spinach greens; there's really no wrong way to make a healthy quinoa salad. This recipe is perfect for those nights when you don't want to fuss too much over dinner.

Ingredients

For the Quinoa:

- 4 cups vegetable broth, or water
- 1 1/2 cups raw whole-grain quinoa
- Salt, to taste, optional

For the Vinaigrette:

- 1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt, to taste, optional
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste, optional

For the Vegetables:

- 1 medium cucumber, sliced
- 1 red or yellow bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 small red onion, diced
- 1/2 cup broccoli florets, lightly steamed
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped

Steps to Make It

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. In a medium saucepan, bring the vegetable broth (or water, if you prefer) to a boil. Salt the water to taste if using water.
3. Add the rinsed or un-rinsed quinoa (see below after the directions), stir, and bring back to a boil.
4. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, for 15 to 20 minutes or until the quinoa absorbs all the liquid.
5. Remove from heat and set aside for 10 minutes, still covered, to allow the quinoa to fully absorb any liquid and become fluffy.

Make the Vinaigrette

1. While the quinoa is cooking, in a small bowl, whisk together the fresh lemon juice, olive oil, minced garlic cloves, and salt and pepper.
2. Set aside at room temperature.

Make the Salad

1. Remove the cover from the quinoa and fluff it with a fork.
2. Allow it to cool slightly and then toss with the sliced cucumber, diced bell pepper, diced red onion, steamed broccoli, chopped tomatoes, and the lemon-garlic vinaigrette, stirring to combine well.
3. Add more salt and pepper to taste, and chill before serving if you have the time, although this is just as tasty at room temperature.

A Word About Rinsing Quinoa

The debate rages on—should you rinse quinoa before cooking it or not? In the case of rice, it is rinsed to remove some of the starchiness and stickiness. With quinoa, the rinsing serves to remove its natural coating, called saponin, which some claim can make it taste bitter or otherwise unpleasant.

After being cooked, unrinsed quinoa has a firmer texture and a nuttier flavor than rinsed quinoa. So, ultimately, the choice to rinse or not rinse is yours. There is no wrong or right, it comes down to which taste appeals to you more. Besides, most of the quinoa sold in the United States has been prewashed (but check the box).

Leftover Quinoa?

You might consider making twice the amount of quinoa called for in this recipe so you can have leftovers on hand to make salads, add to soup, mix with texturized vegetable protein, tofu, or for curries and other meals throughout the week.

More About Whole Grains

If you like quinoa, you might want to branch out and try some other whole grains such as kaniwa, millet, and teff. They are versatile and, if you buy them in bulk, they're a bargain.