

KANIWA pronounced kay-nyi-wa

Kaniwa is a small, grain-like food from the Andes Mountains in Peru. It is a new product to the United States but is expected to appeal to consumers of nutrient-rich foods like quinoa, teff, and amaranth. Like quinoa, teff, and amaranth, kaniwa is technically a seed that we cook and enjoy like a grain. An advantage of kaniwa over its more popular cousin quinoa is that it does not have saponins, a component that requires rinsing the quinoa well before it is cooked. Kaniwa is much smaller than quinoa, however, and may be better used adding to recipes rather than eating like a porridge.

Foods like blueberries, broccoli, and flaxseeds have been termed superfoods, and the latest food to join this category is kaniwa.

BUCKWHEAT GROATS

Buckwheat, which is commonly found in raw food diet recipes, has a slightly deceptive name that can easily cause confusion. Buckwheat is not wheat, nor is it related to wheat. It is not a grain nor a cereal and is gluten-free. Buckwheat is derived from the seeds of a flowering plant. The triangular seeds, known as buckwheat groats, are frequently made into flour for use in noodles, crepes, and many gluten-free products on the market these days. Buckwheat is a good binding agent and, when soaked, becomes very gelatinous. Soaking, rinsing, and re-drying the groats produces a crunchy buckwheat crispy that is nice as well.

PEARL BARLEY

Pearl barley refers to barley grains, an important cereal grain, that has been processed to remove certain parts of each grain. All barley usually has the hull removed, since the hull is inedible. Pearl barley gets additional treatment by having most of the bran removed too. If you're looking at the dried goods section of your grocery store, you'll likely find pearl barley near dried peas, lentils and beans, or you can purchase this processed barley in bulk at many natural foods stores.

Some pearl barley receives further processing, and can then be ground into flour, or chopped into flakes similar to oatmeal flakes. Such flakes can make an excellent hot cereal or be present in multi-grain cereals. Barley flakes also make their way into animal feed. Roughly half of the barley produced in the world is used to feed animals.

In "people food," pearl barley is found in a variety of soups and stews. It makes a great alternative to rice or pasta, and can help thicken soups. Unlike beans, it doesn't require pre-soaking prior to adding it to dishes, but it does require time to soften. You can find a few instant varieties that will cook faster, but you should usually plan to cook the pearl barley for at least an hour.

QUINOA

pronounced 'kēnwä

While quinoa is usually considered to be a whole grain, it is actually a seed, but can be prepared like whole grains such as rice or barley.

Quinoa is my favorite whole grain for three reasons: First, it takes less time to cook than other whole grains – just 10 to 15 minutes. Second, quinoa tastes great on its own, unlike other grains such as millet or teff. Add a bit of olive oil, sea salt and lemon juice and - yum! Finally, of all the whole grains, quinoa has the highest protein content, so it's perfect for vegetarians and vegans.

Quinoa provides all **9 essential amino acids**, making it a complete protein. Quinoa is a **gluten-free** and **cholesterol-free** whole grain, is **kosher for passover**, and is almost always organic.

Culinary ethnologists will be interested to know that quinoa was a staple food for thousands of years in the Andes region of South America as one of just a few crops the ancient Incas cultivated at such high altitude.

MILLET

Millet is an ancient seed, originally cultivated in the dry climates of Africa and northern China since the Neolithic Era. (A few years ago, archaeologists discovered a 4000-year old bowl of millet noodles in northwestern China!) In time, millet spread throughout the world; the Romans and Gauls made porridge from it, and in the Middle Ages millet was more widely eaten than wheat. It is mentioned in the Old Testament as an ingredient for bread.

Today, millet continues to be a staple for a third of the world's population. Ground millet is used in flatbreads, such as Indian roti and Ethiopian and Eritrean injera (made from teff, a variety of millet). In Eastern Africa, millet is used to make beer. It is also an ingredient in Eastern European fermented drinks and porridges.

In America and Western Europe, millet has mostly been relegated to bird and livestock feed. However, interest in the grain has been growing, especially in gluten-free diets. It's nutritious – providing fiber, iron, B vitamins, manganese, phosphorus, and magnesium – and highly alkaline, making it easily digestible and soothing to the stomach.

There are many varieties of millet; the primary types are called pearl, foxtail, proso, and finger. Yellow proso is the kind most often found pre-packaged or in bulk bins at health food stores. (Do buy millet intended for human consumption, as the millet sold for pet food still has the undigestible outer hull.)

FARRO

Farro is a type of wheat that was among the first plants to be domesticated in the Middle East. It is low yielding and has been largely replaced over the centuries by other crops, but it remains as a relict species in mountainous areas of Europe and Asia. Farro grows in wild and cultivated varieties, and it is still a popular food in some areas of the world, notably Italy.

There is some confusion about the difference between farro, emmer, and spelt. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN), farro is listed as a common name for *Triticum aestivum* L. subsp. *spelta*, or spelt, and *Triticum turgidum* L. subsp. *dicoccon*, also called emmer wheat. It has been suggested that the name "farro" was used in different parts of Italy to describe different types of wheat, leading to this confusion. When cooking, however, it is important to note that farro and spelt may not be interchangeable in all recipes, so it is important to use the grain that is called for.

Farro grows wild in the Fertile Crescent area of the Middle East. The seeds of wild farro self-propagate by digging into the soil with their awns, spiky filaments that can also be seen on the heads of emmer wheat. The awns expand and contract in reaction to changes in humidity, causing the seeds to burrow into the soil and grow. Farro grows well even in poor soils and is resistant to fungus.

BASMATI BROWN RICE

Brown Basmati Rice is the best food to be found on Earth. It provides protein and carbohydrates as well as B-vitamins which aid digestion. Sadly most Westerners eat white rice (and white bread and white pasta), which has had all the goodness (the husks) removed, leaving just the energy, but without the vitamins to digest it. This causes constipation and eventually the cancers and heart disease we are all dying from.

Apparently brown things were thought unclean to the white colonials who invaded the East. Basmati rice was traditionally used for special occasions and parties, because of its fragrant aroma, but I reckon that every meal should be special. It is said that the smell of basmati rice cooking will help to sell a house or create a convivial atmosphere. Maybe try also Jasmine Rice, but again, make sure it is brown, not white.

OAT Groats ~ steel cut

Oats were one of the earliest cultivated cereals. The ancient Greeks were the first people known to make porridge (cereal) from oats. In England, oats were considered inferior, but in Ireland and Scotland they were used in many kinds of porridges and baked goods. Oats came to America with British immigrants in the 1600s, and in fact, the British Quaker influence inspired the name for “Quaker Oats.” Today oats are produced in many countries, but Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota and central Canada lead in oat production in North America.

They contain vitamin E, several B-vitamins, calcium, magnesium and potassium. Oats also have some of the trace minerals selenium, copper, zinc, iron and manganese. They’re full of good-for-you phytochemicals and have both soluble and insoluble fiber. Oats have been found to benefit heart health, lower blood pressure, and can even help prevent diabetes as part as a high whole-grain diet.

Oat Groats are the starting point. This is the harvested “as-is” product. Whole oat groats are widely used as animal feed, but not so easily found for human consumption. Some health food stores carry them. Whole oat groats can be cooked or steamed, but because they’re a bigger grain than rice or even whole wheat kernels, take much longer to cook. Because they are “as-is”, they have the highest nutritional value of all forms of oats. They are digested very slowly, which reduces the glycemic load and makes them quite filling.

Steel cut oats are also commonly called Irish Oatmeal. They’re exactly what the name says, being whole oat groats that have been steel cut into smaller pieces. This shortens the cooking time, but keeps all the nutritional value of the whole oat groats.

HARD RED WHEAT

Hard white wheat was developed from hard red wheat by eliminating the genes for bran color while preserving other desirable characteristics of red wheat. Depending on variety, red wheat has from one to three genes that give the bran its red cast; in contrast, white wheat has no major genes for bran color. The elimination of these genes results in fewer phenolic compounds and tannins in the bran, significantly reducing the bitter taste that some people experience in flour milled from red wheat. Nutritional composition is the same for red and white wheat.

Spring wheat is planted in April to May, makes a continuous growth and is harvested in August to early September. Winter wheat is planted in the fall. It makes a partial growth, becomes dormant during the cold winter months, resumes growth as the weather warms and is harvested in the early summer (June and July).

Flour from hard red winter wheat is often preferred for artisan breads.