

## GOOD EATING

## Seder tables could get a makeover with quinoa

By PEGGY WOLFF

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Opinions differ as to what's in a Passover cook's repertoire, but now that quinoa, the ancient South American grain of the Incas, has been approved as kosher-for-Passover by leaders in Kashrut supervision, home cooks can delight in adding some carbs to the Seder table.

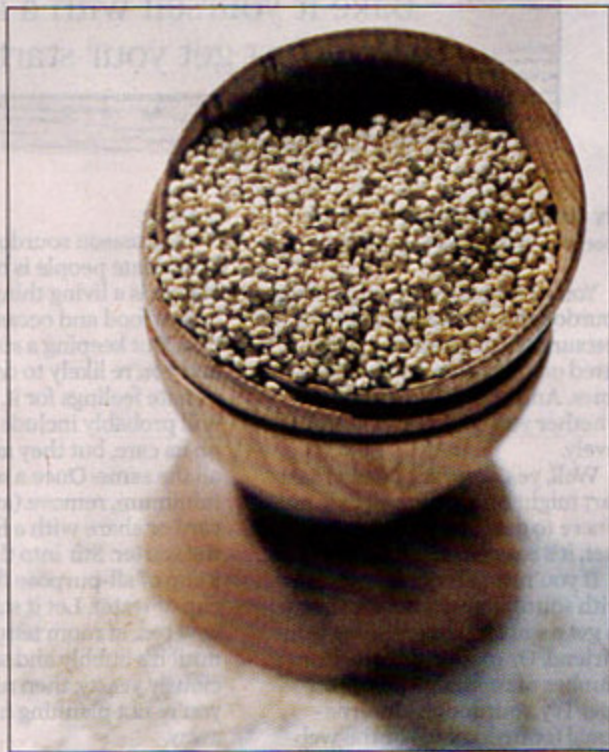
You see, quinoa is not a grain. Rabbis had reservations about certifying it because it behaved and looked like a grain. But it is an annual herb that bears seeds in a cluster.

"It was a concern but now it's fine, it's supervised. You can use it on Passover," said Rabbi Michael Balinsky, executive vice president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis.

"Quinoa is a perfectly fine seed but the question is what's being grown next to it, does it grow in proximity to grains?" If quinoa grows next to a field of barley, it is difficult to separate grains that get mixed in. Some farmers spread barley over a quinoa field to keep the birds from eating the quinoa seeds.

Another question was whether it was processed in the same facility as other grains, making it likely that small amounts of barley or oats could've cross-contaminated the quinoa crop.

Reliable kosher-for-Passover supervision guarantees that the quinoa does not grow adjacent to a grain field, and that it's not transported to the mill in sacks that were used to carry grains. Traces of the five restricted Passover grains mentioned in the Talmud — wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye — could be found in the quinoa if the machines weren't adequately cleaned between the processing of different products.



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It was only a year ago that the Orthodox Union said it could not certify quinoa, but late last year they reversed that position.

"We are the largest certification company in the world and wanted to do our own research. Before we certify something we want to be 1,000 percent sure," said Rabbi Moshe Elefant, C.O.O. of the Kashrut Division of the Orthodox Union. "We sent a rabbi (to South America) who works for us, who lived in Chile, speaks the language, knows the culture, and he was able to determine quinoa fields that were not near any grain fields." Two of the brands that the Orthodox Union certifies for Passover use are Goobaums and Pereg. If shopping for kosher for Passover quinoa, be sure to check for the O/U-p designation on the label of these products.

Home cooks who keep kosher can look for quinoa packaging that bears a

kosher-for-Passover certification label from other agencies such as Star-K or the Chicago Rabbinic Council. It will be from a run of production that had full-time supervision by Kashrut authorities, such as the Ancient Harvest Brand ([ancientharvest.com/grain/organic-quinoa](http://ancientharvest.com/grain/organic-quinoa)).

If you are more lenient about your Passover foodstuffs, and don't necessarily purchase certified kosher-for-Passover foods, quinoa is also sold in bulk or in boxes or bags. At your grocery store, look in the healthy food section, or in the aisle with beans, grains and seeds. Quinoa is also sold at health food stores.

To avoid any hametz (leavened foods forbidden at Passover), spread the quinoa out on a cookie sheet and pick out any grains that might have cross-contaminated the crop.

[foods@tribune.com](mailto:foods@tribune.com)