

# Ancient Grains on the Menu at Holy Names

**W**hen foodservice management company Epicurean Group held one of its culinary development team meetings, someone mentioned starting an ancient grains program.

Rufino Quicho, food and beverage operations manager at Holy Names University in Oakland, Calif., one of the company's clients, decided that his school would be the perfect one to launch the program. "I saw a little spark in my executive chef's eye when it came up," he said. "That is the project we took the reins on. One of the things that makes this university stand out is that it has been recognized as the most diverse university in Northern California. Knowing the students that we have and knowing the conversations that we have had with them in our food meetings and other things like that, this is the perfect crowd to start this program with."

Ancient grains — those that have been eaten by mankind for thousands of years, but not as widespread as barley, corn, oats, rice and wheat — have become popular in recent years. (See sidebar for list of ancient grains used at Holy Names.)

At least one dish featuring an ancient grain is available each day. "We have been able to really try out a lot of new things and really get immediate feedback," he said. "We are a small enough university as well, that there is a really good relationship with the people who are serving the food. My staff knows 80 percent of the student body on a first-name basis."

The grains have been introduced in many areas and are popular at the two salad stations. "Because we have a full salad bar, we have tossed the idea between the organic salad bar and the made-to-order salad station," said Quicho. "For example, today we had a quinoa and black bean with pomegranate seed salad. That goes on top of arugula and it is sitting right in our made-to-order station."

In addition to offering the grains, Quicho and his team offer up education. "Every time we launch a program like this, I always like to add the educational component behind it," he said. "Right now in the corner of our dining room is a



Epicurean Group's  
Rufino Quicho

### Ancient Grains at Holy Names University

- Amaranth
- Chia Seeds
- Farro
- Freekeh
- Kamut
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Sorghum
- Spelt
- Teff

little display, two tables worth. It has the grains that you can run your fingers through. There are snippets from our corporate cookbook of recipes, so that if they ever want to write it down and take it home, they can give it a try. We also have the nutritional information behind it. We have a lot of athletes on campus, and I think they are always concerned about what they put in their bodies. I think it is nice when they see that we are providing this nutritious food, and making it delicious and introducing it to them in ways that they like."

Students enjoy the program. "It is one of the fun things I like about the student body that we have," said Quicho. "They are really engaged and really involved. They are willing to try new things. I have a student body that, although they like their chili dogs and burger days, they really embrace that we are trying new things. They are certainly quick with the feedback."

For some students, the program is about more than just food. "It really hit home for one of the students," he said. "He was pretty emotional about it. He is Iranian, and he had a Freekah dish that his mom used to make for him all the time, and he was so excited that we started this conversation about ancient grains, that he reached out to his mom and she emailed us a recipe."

Students already have some grains that are favorites. "Amaranth is one that the students seem to like," said Quicho. "We try to make sauces with sorghum, so we can teach them the textural thing that's there. Farro is popular. We have made cookies and scones with spelt. Even though it tastes like your normal scone, it's got more vitamin B6, a lot more iron, zinc, 15 to 20 percent more protein than your common

wheat. We are exposing them to that and that we have made these choices for their benefit."

## Quinoa Stuffed Peppers

### Ingredients

2 cups low-sodium chicken broth  
1 cup quinoa  
Extra-virgin olive oil  
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes  
1 clove minced garlic  
Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper  
1/4 cup white wine  
2 large red bell peppers  
2 large green bell peppers  
1/4 cup toasted pepitas

### Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit.

### For the Quinoa:

Over medium-high heat, bring the broth to a boil in a medium saucepan. As the broth is coming to boil, add the quinoa, then stir and cover. Reduce the heat to a simmer and steam the quinoa until the grains pop, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let stand for 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork.



### For the Peppers:

Set a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add a drizzle of olive oil and add the crushed red pepper flakes and garlic. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook until well browned, 5 to 7 minutes, while stirring with a wooden spoon and breaking up the pieces. Deglaze with the wine. Rinse the peppers and pat dry. With the pepper lying down on its side, cut off the top and remove the seeds and membrane. Repeat for the remaining peppers. Leave the stem on the top for presentation. Set aside.

In a mixing bowl, fold in the quinoa and pepitas. Mix to incorporate all ingredients thoroughly. Check for seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper if required.

Set the peppers on a roasting tray cut-side up and stuff each with about 2/3 cup of filling. Cover loosely with foil, place in the center of the oven and bake for 15 minutes. When the peppers are tender and cooked through, remove the foil and turn on the broiler. Cook under the broiler 1 to 2 minutes. Remove the peppers from the oven and allow to rest before serving.

**Yield:** 4 Servings

## Millet and Roasted Fig Salad

### Ingredients

3/4 cup uncooked millet  
1 1/2 cups water  
Lime juice and water, as needed  
2 cloves garlic, pressed or minced  
1/2 cup onion, chopped  
1 cup bell peppers, any color, chopped  
1 jalapeno, chopped  
1 cup diced roasted figs  
1/2 cup cilantro, chopped



### Preparation:

In a small covered saucepan, bring the water and millet to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the liquid is absorbed, about 30 minutes. Place a little lime juice and water in a medium skillet over medium heat. Sauté the garlic until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the onions and bell peppers and cook until softened, adding more water as necessary. Add the jalapeno and cook until heated through.

Cool millet into bowl and top with cilantro and figs.

**Yield:** 4 – 6 Servings

## Millet “Pico de Gallo”

### Ingredients

3/4 cup uncooked millet    1/2 cup onion, chopped  
1 1/2 cups water            1 cup bell peppers, any color, chopped  
1 jalapeno, chopped        Lime juice and water, as needed  
2 cloves garlic, chopped    1/2 cup cilantro, chopped

### Preparation

In a small covered saucepan, bring the water and millet to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the liquid is absorbed, about 30 minutes. Cool for 1 hour.

Place a little lime juice and water in a mixing bowl. Add the millet, garlic, onions, jalapeno and bell peppers and top with cilantro.

Serve as a side dish with grilled chicken and seasonal vegetables.

**Yield:** 4 Servings



PHOTOS COME FROM HEALTHY HOLY NAMES STORIES

# Cornell Promotes Fruits and Vegetables

**A**fter a successful “5 Days” Special Diet Challenge last year, Cornell Dining at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., recently ran a successful follow-up called “Have You Had Your 5 Today?”

While the first 5 Days challenge dealt with giving frontline staff firsthand experience with living on a special diet for a week, this year’s program was designed to motivate students and staff to eat more fruits and vegetables.

“We wanted something that was a little more accessible, something that we were already serving, and we really thought it would be great if we could expand it to students and staff,” said Michele Lefebvre, RD, CDN, director, Nutrition Management at Cornell Dining. “Last year, we had just the 30-40 managers and chefs that participated. Our main goal this year was to get students involved. As I was thinking about how to get students involved, I thought, ‘What would be foods that are accessible to them every day?’”

She continued, “People think fruits and vegetables are fairly easy, but if you actually start thinking about eating five cups a day, there are a lot of students who think, ‘Wow, this is actually something harder than I first thought.’ It is a way to educate our students about eating more fruits and vegetables, to expand their breakfast, lunch and dinner, and a good prompt to go out into the world and think about how many fruits and vegetables they are eating on a daily basis.”

Key to the program was the involvement of student staff, according to Lefebvre. “We had a kick-off party at the end of February,” she said. “At the kick-off party, our almost 40 student managers were given pledge cards in the shape of an apple, and they were asked to schedule three tabling sessions at each of their dining units. Our student managers were encouraged to obtain pledges from their fellow students.”

When they pledged, students put their names on a pledge



card. They pledged to commit to eating those five cups of fruits and vegetables for those five days during the second week of March.

The pledge cards served as more than just a written declaration. “Those apples were actually hung in all of our dining units across campus,” she said. “That was meant to do two things: not only to get you into the pledge, but to prompt students when they came into the dining hall to eat those five cups. In terms of behavior change, studies show that you need to have a reminder pretty consistently to really make a behavior change. That was the goal around the pledge cards. They also look fun.”

The pledges also became a competition between dining halls. “It has created some camaraderie around our student managers, as well as competition,” said Lefebvre. “They are all trying to get more pledges than the other units. We will be adding them up to see who had the most.”

Each week of the program highlighted different colors of fruits and vegetables. “The first week was red, then orange and yellow, then green and the final week was blue and purple,” she said. “During the second week, for example, one of our dining halls had things like baby carrots and pureed summer squash. They featured yams, corn, mangos, pineapples and did a bright yellow hummus.”

To add a bit more competition to the program, campus chefs were asked to submit recipes using fruits and vegetables. Students chose the recipe they liked best.

Social media also played a part in the fun. “To help encourage photo sharing, we hosted one of our regular social media photo contests during the pledge week,” said Lefebvre. “Community members who post their photos on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram had a chance to win an iPad.” —OCH

