

Summer Buckwheat Salad

Like quinoa, buckwheat is not a true grain, but because it cooks like rice and has many of the nutrient values we associate with grain we tend to just refer to it as a grain. It is actually a seed related to rhubarb and sorrel. Much of what is produced is used for animal feed and much of the buckwheat grain utilized as food for humans is marketed in the form of flour used to make pancakes and soba noodles. Kasha is the Russian name for buckwheat groats that have been toasted in oil that gives it a very distinctive dark color and nutty aroma. Buckwheat has a slightly bitter and earthy essence, cooks very quickly, and presents itself as a nice flavor canvas that can showcase any number of different flavor profiles.

Buckwheat contains phytochemicals which have been associated with low LDL – or “bad” – cholesterol levels. The rutin and other flavonoids present in buckwheat extend the action of vitamin C and other antioxidants that reduce free radicals and protect against disease. Rutin also has an anti-clotting effect on blood; that with the other attributes mentioned make it a desirable food for folks with heart disease. Buckwheat is also high in manganese, magnesium, and insoluble fiber, another attraction is that it is gluten free.



Buckwheat	2 cups
Water	4 cups
Cucumber	1 med
Red Pepper	2 med
Pineapple	1 med
Red Grapes	1 pound
Cooked Chic Peas	4 cups
Slivered Almonds	8 oz
Jalapeño Pepper	1 ea
Tarragon	2 bn
Mint	= parts
Fruit Infused Vinegar	6 Tbsp
Fresh Orange Juice	1 ea
Lime Zest	1 ea
Fresh Lime Juice	2-3 small
Coconut Aminos	3 Tbsp
Frontier Adobo Seasoning	3 Tbsp
Granulated Garlic	2 Tbsp
Black Pepper	Few Turns

Just like quinoa, buckwheat has a tendency to cook up a bit moist and sticky. So treat it exactly like quinoa by toasting it lightly in a dry sauté pan until it starts to pop, turn a light brown, and give off a nutty aroma. When they make kasha this way they use oil to get that even coloring, but you don't need to oil at all. Cook the toasted buckwheat just like brown rice; 2 parts water to 1 part seed or 2:1. Simmer it for about 10 minutes until the water starts to evaporate and you see the steam channels start to develop and toss it in a 350° to 375° oven until all of the liquid is absorbed, then as with all grain-like products allow it to rest quietly, covered, on the counter top for a good 20 minutes at least, longer if you can. If I'm making a salad like this, I generally make it a good hour before I need it and let it cool down all the way on the counter, which really helps the grain turn out as fluffy and dry as possible.

You can use either canned chick peas or cook your own, either way while the buckwheat is cooking get the cucumber, pineapple, and red pepper cut into small dice, mince up the tarragon and mint – use equal parts, cut the grapes into small discs or halves, and toast the slivered almonds in a dry sauté pan or the oven.

The idea when you're making a composite salad like this is to rely on flavor combinations that you already know work together. This inspiration for this salad is a fruit salsa; we're just tossing in some buckwheat, nuts, and chick peas. Keep that in mind as you are blending the ingredients and deciding how to alter amounts. Try and retain those salsa characteristics as you go. Coconut aminos is made by Coconut Secret from the sap of the coconut tree. It's gluten-free, soy-free, and dairy-free. It's also packed with amino acids and raw processed. That's great, but I use it here, because it's far more subtle than Bragg's Aminos and adds a nice hint of coconut that fits very nicely into our salsa flavor profile.

Don't look for something to stand up and slap you in the face here, it's much more subtle than that! This is a nice light and fruity salad that you can eat right in the hottest part of the day and it will refresh like a cool drink!