



... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Lunch and Picnic Worthy Quinoa Salad

Most Americans know that cooking more meals at home is a great strategy in improving the nutrition quality of their diets while assisting with meeting performance and body weight/composition goals; yet many still default to meals prepared away from home. Studies show having a diet that relies mostly on foods that are prepared away from the home result in higher levels of calories consumed. Over time, this can result in an expanded waistline. Just think, if efforts were made to cook more meals at home, could the opposite occur? Could your waistline shrink? For the most part, the answer is yes.

A diet that is only comprised of nutrient rich, high performance foods like fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, lean meats, and low fat dairy is recommended but without portion control, it can still lead to weight gain if too many calories are consumed.

One of the best ways to make eating more meals at home easy and assist with being sure that your diet is high in nutrients, while remaining at the calorie level that meets your needs, is to aim to dedicate some time to "meal prep". By planning, preparing, and packaging your meals and snacks in advance, you can aim to eat mostly nutritious foods while practicing portion control. There is no right or wrong way to do meal prep. Some find they like to prepare most of their meals for the week, while others only prep their lunches. It's all about what works for you. The goal is to save time in the kitchen while being sure there is ample supply of healthy meals/foods for you at the ready during the week.

Dedicate some time once a week to plan your meals, prepare a shopping list, and then make some foods in advance. If you know that some of your meals will need chicken, on Sunday, bake or grill the amount of chicken you will need for those meals. Just be sure to use the chicken within 2-3 days. While the chicken is cooking, wash and clean the produce you will be using over the week. Cut up some of it to have as snacks and make a batch of salad greens mixed with a variety of vegetables for lunch time salads. You can then add your desired lean proteins and other nutritious items to the salads as desired. Another great meal prep tip is to cook a large batch of a whole grain product such as pasta or brown rice or even quinoa and then use it throughout the week to round out meals. For example one day use it to top your lunch salad and on another day pair it with some broiled vegetables and a lean piece of chicken.

This meal features a mix of a stable grain and can serve as a base to add other nutritious items and is also stable enough to make and then portion out for 4 days of your lunches!



Ingredients: 4 Servings

- 1 cup quinoa
- 2 cups water
- 4 oz. of green chilies
- ¼ cup olive oil
- The juice from two limes
- 2 garlic cloves (minced)
- 2 tsps. Chili powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 - 15 oz. can of low sodium whole corn (drained)
- 1 - 15-16 oz. can black beans (drained and rinsed)
- 1 medium red onion, (sliced very thin)
- 12 cherry tomatoes (halved)
- ¼ cup of fresh cilantro (chopped)

Directions:

1. Bring the quinoa and water to a boil in a medium sized pan. Let it boil for one minute while stirring constantly. Turn the heat to low, cover and let the quinoa continue to cook until the water is absorbed—for about 12-15 minutes. Remove from the heat and let it cool.
2. While the quinoa is cooking, prepare the dressing by draining the green chili juice into a large mixing bowl. Cut up the green chilies and add them to the mixing bowl along with the olive oil, lime juice, garlic, chili powder and salt. Whisk the dressing together.
3. In a large bowl, add the beans, onions, tomatoes, corn and then toss gently. Then add the dressing and stir gently to combine.
4. Once the quinoa has cooled (warm to the touch, not hot) gently mix it and the chopped cilantro into the large bowl with the beans and corn.

Tips:

Make a double batch of quinoa and use ½ of it in another dish later in the week.

Notes: There is no need to add chicken or meat because the quinoa and beans provide a good amount of protein and have fiber to help you feel satisfied. But if you want more bulk, add some of your favorite low calorie, fresh vegetables like broccoli, cucumbers, and/or radishes.

DISCLAIMER:

THIS RECIPE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE AN ENDORSEMENT BY DOD OF ANY INDIVIDUAL VENDOR. ANY PRODUCT OF SIMILAR SPECIFICATION MAY BE USED TO MAKE THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL.

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