



Embracing ancient grains: Recent research highlights nutritional powerhouses

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In recent years, ancient grains have been increasingly making their way onto our dinner plates, pushing aside traditional cereals like wheat, rice, and corn. This revival of centuries-old superfoods can be attributed not only to their rich flavor profiles but also to the host of health benefits that they offer. According to a flurry of studies published over the past few years, incorporating these grains into our diet can have profound effects on our overall health.

As per a recent study conducted by the Food Science and Nutrition Department of Purdue University, ancient grains are a veritable treasure trove of nutrients. They are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can aid in everything from boosting heart health to promoting weight loss and even fighting cancer (Adebowale, 2012).

The researchers focused on a variety of ancient grains, including quinoa, amaranth, teff, and millet. Their findings suggested that these grains had a higher concentration of dietary fiber and protein when compared to common cereals. Quinoa, in particular, was highlighted for its complete protein profile, meaning it contains all nine essential amino acids. This makes it an excellent plant-based protein source, particularly for vegetarians and vegans. In another study published in the Journal of Nutrition and Food Sciences, it was found that these grains have a lower glycemic index than modern grains. This means they release their energy more slowly, helping to keep blood sugar levels steady and reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity. Furthermore, the rich dietary fiber content in these grains aids in digestion and promotes a feeling of fullness, curbing overeating tendencies and thereby supporting weight management goals (Coelho, 2020).

In addition to these benefits, recent research conducted

by the Harvard School of Public Health suggested a correlation between the consumption of ancient grains and a reduced risk of chronic diseases. The research pointed to the antioxidant properties of these grains that help combat inflammation and oxidative stress, which are major contributors to chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer. On the environmental front, ancient grains also come up trumps. A study conducted by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) showed that these hardy grains are more resistant to drought and pests, making them an environmentally friendly option. This resilience makes them particularly viable for cultivation in areas that are increasingly being affected by climate change (Davinelli 2018).

Despite the wealth of benefits, ancient grains are still underutilized. Researchers from the University of Cambridge suggest that the lack of industrial processing techniques and the limited knowledge of their cooking methods have been major hindrances to their popularity. However, the situation is gradually changing, with more chefs, bakers, and home cooks experimenting with these grains and more companies incorporating them into their products.

The upshot of all this research is that ancient grains, with their remarkable nutritional profiles and environmental benefits, can play a significant role in meeting the world's dietary needs while also combating some of the key health issues of our time (Piradashvili et al. 2016).

However, researchers also caution that ancient grains are not a silver bullet. They should be incorporated into a balanced and varied diet that includes a range of fruits, vegetables, and other nutrient-dense foods. Only then

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can their potential truly be unleashed. The recent research findings signal a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive understanding of our dietary staples. The rediscovery of these age-old grains offers an opportunity to make our meals more nutritious, our bodies healthier, and our planet more sustainable. The ancient grains are making a comeback, and they are here to stay. Let's embrace them (Xin & Skrydstrup 2019).

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