

Green Eggs and Quinoa (or brown rice)

This is an easy one-dish meal rich in protein, good fat, fiber, and vegetables. It also allows lots of flexibility in terms of ingredients: chopped cooked broccoli or asparagus, for example, or sliced green onions instead of regular onions, or other kinds of cheese. You can use any kind of leftover brown rice, cooked millet (page 220), or whole grain pasta – but white rice does *not* have the nutritional caliber to qualify. (See page 66.) Leftovers are delicious heated for lunch the next day. Using this recipe as a basic model, and given that you probably have eggs, milk, and cheese on hand, you may want to put this on the *Ten Most Useful Recipes* list.

(Serves 4 as a main dish, more as a side dish)

1 bag (16 ounces) frozen chopped spinach
-or- 16 ounces fresh spinach, roughly chopped

2–4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium-large onion in ¼-inch dice (3 cups)

Optional: ½ pound of fresh sausage (see note)

6 eggs

1½ cups whole milk

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

6 ounces sharp cheddar cheese, grated (about 2 cups)

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan *or* crumbled feta cheese

1½ cups *cooked* quinoa (next page) -or- millet (next page) -or- brown rice (page 222)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Oil a 9×13-inch (3 quart) Pyrex baking dish or similar.

1. **To thaw spinach:** Leave overnight in the refrigerator or heat on the stovetop by placing in a pot or skillet with a lid over a low heat, covered, for 20–30 minutes or until completely thawed and warmed. No need to drain the spinach – it’s ready to add to the egg mixture in step 4.

2. Heat oil in a sturdy 10-inch skillet over medium high heat and sauté onion for about 10 minutes or until very tender. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. **(If using fresh spinach,** use a 6-quart pot instead of a skillet to sauté the onions. Keep the pot on heat and add the fresh chopped spinach, about 4 cups at a time, tossing with the hot onions. When all the spinach is added and wilted down, remove pot and turn off heat. It only needs wilting, not cooking.)
4. Whisk eggs in a mixing bowl or an 8-cup Pyrex jug. Add milk, seasoning, cheeses, cooked quinoa, spinach, and sautéed onion, and mix very well.
5. Scrape into oiled baking dish and bake uncovered for about 60 minutes or until it is no longer wet in the center. *You can cook it at 325 degrees if you want it to finish cooking a little sooner, but a custard-based dish like this will have a better texture cooked at a lower temperature. If you notice mixture bubbling around the edges, reduce heat by 50 degrees.*

Note:

- ▶ You can combine the uncooked mixture hours or even a day ahead, but bring to room temperature and stir thoroughly again before transferring to the cooking dish.
- ▶ Adding ½ pound of fresh chicken or pork sausage (page 68) to the sautéed onions in Step 2 will kick up the flavor, the protein, and the crowd-pleasing qualities. Just push the onions to the side and sauté sausage until browned and well crumbled.
- ▶ Suggestions for preparing other kinds of greens are on page 128.
- ▶ Although confident enough to perform solo as a main act, this pairs nicely with *Marinated Carrot Matchsticks* (page 202), or a substantial salad like *Warm Lentil Salad* (page 213) to make sure people get enough to eat. Once you put *Green Eggs and Quinoa* in the oven you’re free to work on a side dish.

Quinoa

Quinoa (*KEEN-wah*) is a South American grain that looks like ivory-colored millet. Actually, it is not technically a grain, but is generally used like one. It is particularly high in protein and is a good alternative to brown rice, especially since it cooks in about half the time. Quinoa has a natural coating that can supposedly give it a bitter taste, so recipes often suggest rinsing it before cooking – even though most quinoa is apparently pre-washed. However, I never rinse quinoa and have never noticed any bitterness. If you choose to rinse, make sure the sieve is fine enough; quinoa can sneak through some pretty small holes. Also, measure quinoa *before* you rinse it – it swells quickly.

(Makes about 4 cups)

1½ cup quinoa
2¼ cups water
½ teaspoon salt

3. Bring water and salt to a boil in a 2-quart pot (one that has a lid) and add quinoa. Bring back to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for 20 minutes. The water should be absorbed and quinoa should be tender.
4. Remove quinoa from the heat. Fluff grains by tossing with a fork, reaching down to the bottom of the pot. Cover again and set aside for 5–10 minutes.

Note:

▶ Quinoa has a character that particularly suits savory recipes like salads and casseroles. I wouldn't tend to use it as a breakfast cereal.

▶ **To use quinoa:** *Quinoa Salad* (this page); in *Green Eggs and Quinoa* (page 253); in place of barley in *Barley Salad* (page 218); in place of rice in *Brown Rice Power Patties* (page 225); and in *Southwest Chicken Salad* (page 232).

Millet

Millet is a protein-rich grain with a mild but curious flavor (I love it) and tiny round yellow grains that swell amazingly when cooked. (Be sure to buy hull-less millet.) It can be a bit quirky to cook, but when it behaves properly it is almost fluffy and expands to about four times the original quantity. I like to use it in place of rice whenever possible.

(Makes about 2 cups)

½ cup millet, toasted or not (see note)
1¼ cups water
¼ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon butter

4. Bring water, salt, and butter to a boil in a 1½-quart pot (with a lid) and add millet. Bring back to a boil, then reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for 20 minutes.
5. Fluff deeply and thoroughly with a fork: if the water isn't completely absorbed, leave on heat uncovered for about another few minutes.
6. Remove from heat, cover and set aside for 5 more minutes. Then serve, or cover with a towel until cool. Keep for about a week in the refrigerator or freeze.

Note:

▶ **Millet toasting option:**

Place millet in a 1½-quart pot over medium high heat. In a few minutes or as soon as the grains begin to pop and hop, shake the pan every few seconds. In about 2 more minutes add water: it will bubble and spit wildly at first, then settle down. Stir in salt and butter, turn heat to low, cover pan, and cook 20 minutes, as with above directions.

▶ **To use millet:** As a hot breakfast cereal; instead of rice or quinoa in *Green Eggs and Quinoa* (page 253); *Millet (or Brown Rice) Pudding* (page 220); *Millet Bread* (page 264).