



THIS MONTH ▶ Gravity bins update ▶ Make your own mustard ▶ New tea+herb blends

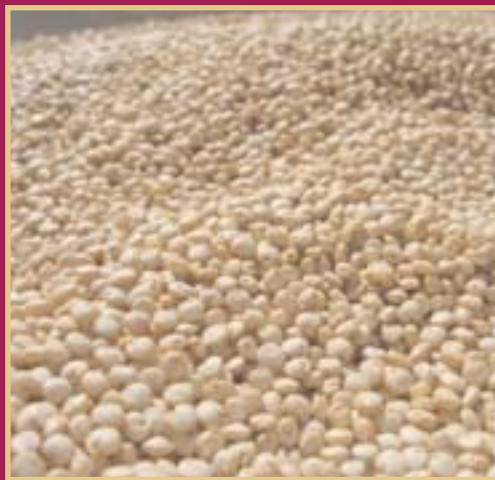
What to do when the rice runs out

As you may know, Australia (and the world) is in the midst of a serious rice shortage. We're in a major and prolonged drought and no one's planted any organic brown rice for more than three years because there've been no water allocations from the Murray-Darling basin. We can debate the pros and cons of growing water-intensive rice in the driest continent on the planet, however, for the foreseeable future, there'll be no locally-grown organic brown rice. Fortunately, there are alternatives. To help you wend your way through the other cereals and grains the co-op stocks, here's some background, how to prepare them and a few recipes.

QUINOA

These days quinoa (at right) is hailed as the supergrain* of the future, yet it has been cultivated for centuries in the Andes by the Incas, who referred to it as the 'mother of grains'. The tiny, bead shaped grains have a mild, slightly bitter taste and firm texture. It is cooked in the same way as rice, but the grains quadruple in size and become translucent with an unusual curly white outer ring. It can be cooked in water or broth for 10-15 minutes and can also be prepared using a rice cooker or pressure cooker. Quinoa is useful for making stuffings, pilafs, bakes and breakfast cereals and can be served like rice, couscous or millet. Unlike other cereals and grains, quinoa is a complete protein because it contains all eight essential amino acids. It is also an excellent source of calcium potassium and zinc as well as iron, magnesium and vitamin B. It is particularly valuable for people with coeliac disease as it is gluten free.

*Quinoa is a pseudocereal, which are



broadleaf plants (non-grasses) that are used in much the same way as cereals; true cereals are grasses. Other pseudocereals include amaranth, buckwheat and chia.

Quinoa pilaf

Serves 3-4

We came up with this pilaf in my household as we're trying to limit our rice intake. It's an excellent after work dinner - quick, healthy and satisfying.

- 1 tsp each of cumin, turmeric, fennel seeds, mustard seeds and cardamom
- 2 tsp curry powder
- 1 cup red lentils, soaked for a few hours or overnight
- 1 cup quinoa
- 4-5 waxy potatoes, cubed
- 400g tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup vegetable stock or water
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 small handful of fresh coriander
- plain yogurt

Fry onion til soft and translucent, add spices and cook through for a few minutes. Add lentils, quinoa and potato and stir through. Add tomatoes and stock and bring slowly to the boil, then reduce to simmer. Place lid on the pot and cook for 20 minutes until liquid has reduced and lentils are soft. Stir through with a fork to check that everything is nicely combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with a dollop of yogurt if you are so inclined and a generous sprinkle of coriander.



■ For week-to-week fruit+veges availability, go to www.alfalfahouse.org/html/PRODUCTS/fruit+veges.htm



The new pulses section

Sponsor-a-Bin drive off to flying start

Our Sponsor-a-Bin drive has raised more than \$1300 so far thanks to the generosity of members Rekha, Dale, Teresa, Caelum, Christine, Annie, Katherine, Heather, Jeff, Beth, Tony, Chris, Mike, Tabitha, Mark, Sally, Sarah and Nassim.

There have also been pledges from some of our suppliers, who are happy to donate either in dollars or in kind.

We've already begun installing some gravity-feed bins, which were donated by one of our members, Cheryl. Check them out in the pulses section over in the corner near the veg spiral.

If you haven't donated and would like to, it's easy. Donations can be made at the till or you can do a direct debit to our bank account. Email Nija (coordinator@alfalfahouse.org) for the details.

Sponsorships start at \$20, however, if you donate \$50, you'll receive one Extra Discount (XD) shop in return, and for a \$100 donation it's two XD shops. (XDs entitle you to 25% off the bin price.) All donations, big or small, are appreciated.

Gravity bins are cleaner, more efficient, and they look better. They make refilling easier and faster, and they allow for far better food-handling practices. We're sure you'll agree that's got to be a plus to improve our shopping experience.

WHEN THE RICE RUNS OUT

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QUICK BREAKFAST

Boil a half cup of quinoa in water for 10 or so minutes until the little tails appear. Drain water off and add grated apple, cinnamon, sultanas, a dollop of honey and yogurt. Or cook it as you would rice until it absorbs all the water for a 'fluffier' breakfast. You can store cooked quinoa in the fridge for a couple of days.

BUCKWHEAT

In spite of its name, buckwheat is not a type of wheat but rather is related to the rhubarb family. It has a nutty, earthy flavour and is a staple in Eastern Europe as well as Russia where the triangular grain is milled into a speckled-grey flour and used to make blini. The flour is also used in Japan to make soba noodles and in Italy for pasta. Buckwheat pancakes are popular in parts of the United States and France. The wholegrain or groats, either roasted or unroasted, makes a type of porridge, known as kasha, which can be used as a stuffing for meatballs and vegetables such as cabbage or capsicums and for piroshki. Like quinoa, buckwheat is a complete protein. It contains all eight essential amino acids as well as rutin, which aids circulation and helps treat high blood pressure. It's an excellent sustaining cereal, rich in both iron and some of the B complex vitamins as well as a good source of thiamine, niacin and magnesium and a moderate source of fibre. It is also reputed to be good for the lungs, the kidneys and the bladder. Buckwheat is gluten-free and is cooked in the same way as rice.

PEARL BARLEY

Pearl barley consists of barley grains which have had their husks and pellicles (outer layers) removed before being steamed and polished until round and shiny. Pearl barley is the most common form of barley and is used to thicken stews, casseroles, desserts and soups and has little taste of its own. It's also great used in place of rice in risottos (see recipe below) and is used to make lemon barley water. Barley is an excellent source of fibre and niacin,

a good source of thiamin, folate, iron magnesium, moderate source of protein and zinc.

Pearl barley risotto

Serves 4

Also works well using roast pumpkin, leek and rosemary to replace the mushrooms and spinach.

- Butter and/or olive oil
- 1 onion or leek, finely chopped
- 200g pearl barley
- 150ml white wine
- 750ml vegetable stock
- 200-300g fresh mushrooms
- 2 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- sea salt and pepper
- a couple handfuls spinach, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan and extra for serving

1. Heat oil/butter in a solid pan and fry the onion/leek until soft. Add barley and stir well to coat, then add wine and let bubble away on a high heat until significantly reduced. Gradually add stock, a little at a time, stirring continuously. Cover pan and simmer 40 minutes or until barley has swollen and absorbed most of the liquid.

2. In the meantime, melt butter/oil and fry garlic for a couple of minutes, add mushrooms and cook for 5 mins. Add salt and pepper to taste and fold through the risotto. Fold in spinach and allow to wilt, stir in the cheese and leave to sit covered for 5 mins before serving. Serve with extra cheese.

AMARANTH

Amaranth is unusually high in protein. A quarter cup holds 60% of the recommended daily intake of iron. Amaranth grain is particularly high in lysine, an amino acid that most grains lack. Amaranth can be cooked as a cereal, ground into flour, popped like popcorn, sprouted, or toasted. The seeds can be cooked with other whole grains, added to stir-fry or to soups and stews as a nutrient dense thickening agent. It can also be used to make porridge. The flour can be used to make pastas and baked goods.

ANDEAN GRAIN MIX

Andean grain mix contains a mix of red, white and black quinoa as well as amaranth. It can very easily be cooked in a rice cooker and the amaranth ▶ 3

grains suspend themselves throughout the mix. When mixed with greens and yellow button squash it makes a colourful salad with a balsamic and mint dressing.

MILLET and MILLET COUSCOUS

Millet is the general name applied to many similar but distinctive grains, most of which have alternative names. All are very small grains with a high protein content but otherwise they vary in their quality and flavour. Although millet is usually associated with bird food, it is a highly nutritious grain. It once rivalled barley as the main food of Europe and remains a staple in many parts of the world including Africa, China and India. It is able to grow in poor conditions and forms a staple in hot, dry regions but is not much eaten in western countries. Millet can be eaten whole, or ground into a coarse flour, typically as porridge or flatbreads. It can also be used to brew beer. Thick millet porridge is eaten throughout Russia as kasha. Its mild flavour makes it an ideal accompaniment to spicy stews and curries and it can be used as a base for pilafs or milk puddings. Millet couscous doesn't take as long to cook as hulled millet but must still be cooked (rather than just soaked in boiling water) and is great to use as layers in lasagne and similar baked dishes in place of pasta sheets. It can also be rolled into balls with veges and spices and then fried. The tiny, firm grains can be flaked or ground into flour. Millet is also gluten-free. The flour can be used for baking but needs to be combined with high gluten flours to make leavened bread. Millet is an easily digestible grain. It contains more iron than other grains and is a good source of zinc, calcium, thiamine, niacin, manganese and B vitamins. It is an excellent source of fibre and believed to be beneficial for those suffering candidiasis.

WHOLEWHEAT COUSCOUS

Although this looks like a grain, couscous is a form of pasta made by steaming and drying cracked durum wheat. Tiny pellets made from semolina flour are moistened with salt water and hand-rubbed with flour until coated and then dried. Couscous is popular in north Africa, where it forms the basis

of a national dish of the same name. Individual grains are moistened by hand, passing through a sieve and then steamed in a couscoussiere suspended over a bubbling vegetable stew, until light and fluffy. Nowadays, the couscous that is generally available is the quick cooking variety, which simply needs soaking, although it can also be steamed or baked. Couscous has a fairly bland flavour, which makes it a good foil for spicy dishes and makes a good base for salads.

Couscous salad with roasted vegetables

Serves 6-8

Feel free to use whatever veges are in season, this works well as a late summer salad treat.

- 400g couscous
- 4-5 zucchini, halved lengthwise
- 2 bulbs fennel, trimmed, thickly sliced
- 2 red onions, peeled, cut into wedges
- 3 capsicum, preferably red, halved, deseeded and cut into chunks
- 2 eggplants, cut into chunks
- 4 cloves garlic
- extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt and fresh ground black pepper
- generous handful of parsley, basil, oregano, mint
- generous squeeze of lemon juice

1. In a preheated 200°C oven, place vegetables with a generous splash of olive oil, garlic cloves, salt and pepper – best to roast in one layer so use two baking trays if necessary. Roast 30-40 mins until veges are cooked though and starting to crisp around the edges. When cool, tip onto a large chopping board with the fresh herbs and chop finely.
2. Bring a pot of salted water to the boil and cook the couscous 15 mins until tender. Drain and leave to sit for a few minutes. Heat some olive oil in a pan and gently fry couscous for a few mins only, stirring constantly with a fork. Dress with some more olive oil and lemon juice, season with some more salt and pepper and toss with the roasted herb veges. Serve warm or at room temperature. Add some Meredith Goats fetta if so inclined.

POLENTA

Polenta is made from cornmeal, and can be coarse or fine and yellow or white in colour. It is a staple of northern Italy ▶ 4

Make your own MUSTARD



Mustard used to be one of the very few things our household bought from the supermarket . . . until we realised how easy it was to make it ourselves!

To make about a cup of mustard you'll need:

- 90g brown or yellow mustard seeds (or both if you like)
- 1/4 cup rapadura sugar (or honey)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cracked pepper
- 1 tsp of turmeric
- 7/8 cup vinegar or white wine

1. Blend mustard seeds, sugar, salt, pepper and turmeric. The longer the blend time, the finer the mustard will be.
2. Gradually add liquid one tablespoon at a time. You should have a coarse paste, let this stand 20 minutes.
3. Spoon into a clean jar, cap tightly and store in the fridge. This should be ready in about two weeks.

TIP: Add garlic, chilli, herbs or spices for that individual touch
Now, if we can just learn how to make vege sausages, we need never go to a supermarket again!

– Renata Field

If you have a how-to for *DIY World*, please send them to info@alfalfahouse.org

Thanks for your patience

For the past month or so, many of our suppliers were closed for the festive season and quite a few of our product lines were in short supply or simply unavailable. We're almost back to normal now. A big thank you for your patience and understanding.

–Monika Baumann, Groceries

WHEN THE RICE RUNS OUT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

where it's traditionally boiled in water to make a thick porridge and either served warm or cooled then fried, grilled or baked. Polenta goes well with just about everything: Mushrooms, rosemary, tomatoes, zucchini, eggplants, basil, garlic, fennel, olives, chilli, parmesan cheese, spinach, cavalo nero and so on and so on. Serve soft or crispy.

Firm polenta

- 255g polenta
- about 1.7 litres water

Bring a big pot of salted water to boil and slowly whisk in polenta. As soon as it starts to thicken and boil, it will start spitting at you so put a lid on the pot and turn the heat right down to low. Give it a stir every few minutes. Cook for about 20–30 mins, should be the consistency of soft mashed potato. Add salt and pepper and parmesan cheese if desired. Then tip it out onto a bench, tray or a large board. It should be about 2cm thick and the size of a large plate. Leave for an hour or so, then slice it to your desired size. Then either brush it with oil and bake it or fry it in oil until brown and crispy on the outside.

Soft polenta

Soft or wet polenta uses the same measurements, however after about 20 minutes cooking add more water to a loose whipped cream consistency (should roll easily off the end of the spoon). Then add parmesan cheese to taste and butter if desired, stir well and it's ready to serve. You can serve soft polenta with sautéed mushrooms and thyme, with fish or meat, with any veges of your choice.

SEMOLINA

Made from the endosperm of durum wheat, semolina can be used to make a hot milk pudding and porridge or it can be added to cakes, biscuits and bread to give them a pleasant grainy texture. Semolina is a moderate source of protein, thiamine, niacin and iron. Durum semolina is used to make extruded pasta products, such as spaghetti; hard wheat semolina is used to make puddings, cakes (especially from the Middle East), North African couscous and breakfast cereals.

SOURCES

Wholefoods: a Cook's Kitchen Handbook Nicola Graimes
The Cook's Bible of Ingredients: an illustrated reference to over 1000 foods Margaret Brooker

What food is that and how healthy is it? Jo Rogers

Compiled by Monika Baumann
Recipes by Genevieve Derwent

Tea & Herb Blends

TEAS

These can all be found in our new organic herbal teas section at the back of the shop above macrobiotics and the rices. This is also where the chamomile, peppermint, spearmint, roobios, lemongrass and rosehips now live along with new additions of red rose petals and hibiscus/rosetta flowers.

GINGER BLISS, WARMING

Ingredients: ginger, lemongrass, hibiscus flowers, calendula flowers
■ Stimulates digestion, helps relieve morning sickness, motion sickness, coughs, colds and bronchitis

LEMON DRIFT, SOOTHING AND CLEANSING

Ingredients: lemongrass, lemon myrtle, lemon peel, hibiscus, liquorice, spearmint
■ Stimulating, a tonic for the kidneys, cooling and astringent

HEAVENLY BLEND, BOOSTER

Ingredients: echinacea, siberian ginseng, spearmint, ginger, lemongrass
■ Stimulates the immune system, helps fight infections, promotes healing, fights upper respiratory tract infections.

GROCERIES *what's* NEW

BLUE MOON, REST AND RELAX

Ingredients: chamomile, peppermint, lemonbalm, corn flowers, rosemary
■ Helps settle nervous tension, anxiety, mild depression, restlessness, irritability. Ideal to drink at bedtime.

ANISEED DELIGHT, DIGESTIVE

Ingredients: aniseed myrtle, aniseed, star anise, liquorice, lemongrass, hibiscus
■ Promotes healthy digestion, easing nausea and flatulence. An expectorant soothing irritating coughs and bronchial problems.

HERBS

Some recent additions to our herbs and spices along the front window.

CASSEROLE BLEND

Ingredients: basil, fenugreek, raspberry leaf, peppermint, sage and marjoram
■ For stews, hotpots and casseroles

SALAD AND VEGES BLEND

Ingredients: basil, peppermint, thyme, lemon balm
■ For all vegetarian dishes

MARINADE MIX

Ingredients: garlic granules, garlic powder, ground ginger, cumin seeds, coriander seeds, chilli, cumin powder
■ Good to add to toasted sesame oil and tamari when marinating tofu or can be use as a spice base for a red curry (just add coconut milk, a bit of sesame oil and tamari). This mix is made at the co-op.

PRICEWATCH

Product	Alfalfa House* Cert. Organic	Health Food Store Cert. Organic	Supermarket Cert. Organic	Supermarket Not Organic
Brazil nuts, 100g	\$2.45	\$4.20	NA	\$2.67
Coffee beans, 100g	\$5.04	\$5.60	\$8.00	\$2.40
Muesli (basic), 100g	\$0.90	\$2.40	\$1.50	\$1.00
Strawberry jam, 100g	\$2.74	\$2.65	NA	\$1.00
Arborio rice, 100g	\$1.27	\$0.90	NA	\$0.51

SURVEY NUMBER 5, FEBRUARY 2009 NA: not available

*PRICES ARE WITH THE BASIC 10% MEMBER DISCOUNT.

– Compiled by Jo Rose

Recipe of the moment

WITH STEVIE BEE

Soaked dried fruit

VEGAN, GLUTEN-FREE. SINGLE SERVE

For some years, I've wanted to share the delight of soaking and restoring to their full splendence the many dried fruits we stock in the co-op. Dried fruit is such a convenient food to snack on simply because it's so easy to eat straight from the packet or jar and therefore to overdo it and end up in a sugar headspin.

When you soak them, you're less likely to eat as many. Soon after I began soaking, I noticed I didn't need as much fruit to feel the benefit and to feel full. Mind you when you taste soaked mango, it'll be hard to stop: it's almost akin to slurping fresh mango. And those humble little apricots and figs will have you thinking you're eating caramel lollies! Then there's the juice, which just has to be the most intense fruit liqueur imaginable, rivalling Lloyd's grape juice.

■ Any dried fruit (cherries, peaches, nectarines, all types of figs, apricots, incan berries, mango even medjool dates work well). Whole dried bananas don't work, slices do. Select up to 10-12 pieces.

METHOD

■ Place in a small jar, about the size of the Loving Earth coconut-cacao blend (about 175g), cover with about twice as much water, pop the lid on and leave overnight or for up to 8 hours in the day. If you want to speed up the process, warm the water to 40°C, around lukewarm. Enjoy them for breakfast, either on their own or with your usual cereal.

5 All past recipes are on the website. Go to www.alfalhouse.org/html/recipes.htm

ALFALFA HOUSE TURNS 21!

Autumn Harvest

HIS YEAR ALFALFA HOUSE TURNS THE BIG 21.

Although the co-op had its humble beginnings in the early '80s, it wasn't registered as a co-op until December 23, 1988. And we're celebrating with an Autumn Harvest. Sometime in April – no fixed date as yet – we're up for a day of market stalls, food, fun for kids and more and winding up with a party in the evening. Something for everyone.

As you can imagine, it'll take a bit of organising. We're looking for volunteers to help out preparing food, with transport, graphic design, procuring goods for stalls, bands, djs, performers, promotion, raffles, handling enquiries and so much more.

■ If you'd like to help out in any way, please contact Nassim (nassim_arrage@clc.net.au) or 0410 313 791 as soon as possible. Don't forget any volunteer work attracts Extra Discounts. Let's make this a day and night to remember.

POSITIONS VACANT

Two spots on the MC

There are two vacancies on the co-op's board of directors, known as the Management Committee (MC). If you'd like to help shape the direction of Alfalfa House, why not join? To find out more there's plenty of info on the WHO ARE WE page of the website (www.alfalhouse.org), including Directors' Duties as well as the minutes from the meetings. If you'd like to chat to an MC member about it, email coordinator@alfalhouse.org.

FREE 2009 CALENDAR INCLUDING FREE SAMPLES+GIFTS

Don't forget to pick up your free Alfalfa House calendar next time you're shopping or print your own from the website's NEWS page. Each calendar features a number of coupons, which you can redeem for free samples and gifts. During February, spend \$60 and receive a gift valued at \$8.

PRINT YOUR OWN CALENDAR. GO TO www.alfalhouse.org/assets/downloads/ah_calendar09.pdf

That 'eco-carrybag' gets a new lease on life

They've become almost as ubiquitous as the dreaded plastic bag, clogging up cupboards and storage sheds and no doubt going to landfill. Those initially green and ostensibly sturdy reusable shopping bags were supposed to replace the flimsy-by-comparison plastic carrybag. But it seems if we do use them, we forget to take them with us when we go shopping and so end up buying more and more of them. Well,

the smart folks at The Watershed are doing something about it. They've been collecting them and re-stenciling them with their logo. And Alfalfa House will soon stock them to loan to shoppers. So if you forget or need a carrybag, you can borrow one from the co-op and return it next time you shop. You'll find them next to the cardboard carry boxes above the pastas and flours.

FEED THE eNEWS

This newsletter is your voice and a great way to communicate with other members.

Please feel free to send in your hints, tips, ideas, suggestions and recipes to feedback@alfalhouse.org

E-News is edited and designed by Stevie Bee for Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative Ltd