

Mexican Inspired Quinoa, Baby Spinach and Avocado Salad

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Ingredients:

1 Cup organic red quinoa
¾ bag of organic baby spinach
1/3 C raw pumpkin seeds
1 C chopped small tomatoes (I love Trader Joes mini San Marzano bagged tomatoes)
2 ripe Hass avocados
Fresh lime juice
Chopped fresh jalapeño (optional)
Chopped cilantro (optional)
Maldon or other good flaky sea salt to taste

Dressing:

¼ Cup fresh lime juice
¾ Cup olive oil
2 full tablespoons cumin seeds, roasted
1 t agave (or more, to taste)
Sea salt, to taste
Black pepper, to taste

Rinse the quinoa well and then cook like pasta in large pot of unsalted boiling water for approx. 12 min. (The quinoa is done when the spiral part separates from the seed part. You need a fine mesh strainer for this method.) Place the baby spinach in a large bowl you can use to mix and serve the salad. Chop the tomatoes and section the avocados into bite size pieces, after you sprinkle each half with flaky salt and lime juice. Chop one whole jalapeño (without seeds, just the outside of the pepper) and about 1/3 Cup of cilantro if you are using these. (I made it the second time without these and it turned out fine.)

Toast the pumpkin seeds in a 350° oven for 10-15 min; (check for toasty aroma and slight golden tinge). Set aside to add last.

(Option to drain and put quinoa directly onto spinach while hot in order to wilt the spinach: If you like the spinach more raw, just cool the quinoa before adding.) Then, add the tomatoes, avocado pieces, and pepper and cilantro if using. Mix well.

With quinoa, I usually add some sea salt as soon as it's cooked, because it needs seasoning!

Make the dressing:

Toast the cumin seeds on the stovetop in a dry skillet until just beginning to flavor and cook. Be vigilant as they burn quickly. (If you have time during the quinoa cooking, do this then.)

Cool in a mortar and pestle while assembling the rest of the dressing. Crush into a powder when cooled.

Whisk olive oil with fresh lime juice and then add the cumin seeds and agave to taste. (I didn't think it needed salt because I added salt to the quinoa and to the avocados.)

Pour the dressing over the salad and toss well.

Taste after all is mixed together! Keeps well for several days in the fridge.