

Quinoa Crust Quiche

Makes 18 muffin-size quiches, or one large quiche

This plant-forward recipe from the Kenmore Middle School culinary team (Arlington) won top honors in the Real Food for Kids' 10th Annual Culinary Challenge, held this year at Hayfield Secondary School in Alexandria. It can also be baked in a deep-dish pie pan.

The team served their quiche with an Apple Arugula Walnut Salad (see related recipe).

INGREDIENTS

For the crust:

1 cup chicken broth
1½ cups water, divided
1 cup dried quinoa, rinsed thoroughly
⅓ cup flaxseed meal (ground flaxseed)
3 tablespoons vegetarian butter substitute, such as Smart Balance, melted
½ teaspoon salt

For the filling:

1 tablespoon vegetarian butter substitute (see above)
1 small onion, chopped
1 cup diced fresh mushrooms
2 packed cups fresh baby spinach, rinsed well and patted dry
1 teaspoon dried spice mix, divided (see NOTE, below)
8 ounces silken tofu, drained
3 large eggs
½ cup light table cream
½ cup unsweetened (plain) almond milk
½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
¾ cup mixed shredded cheese (white and sharp cheddars, smoked provolone), plus more for sprinkling

DIRECTIONS

For the crust:

- Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Grease one 12-well muffin pan and one 6-well muffin pan (standard cup size) lightly with cooking oil spray.
- Bring the broth and 1 cup of the water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Stir in the rinsed quinoa. Reduce the heat so the liquid is barely bubbling (a simmer), cover, and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed. Remove from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes, then uncover and fluff with a fork. The yield should be about 3 cups. (The quinoa can be cooked a day in advance and refrigerated.)
- Combine the flaxseed meal with the remaining ½ cup of water in a mixing bowl; this will help bind the crust. Allow the mixture to stand for 5 minutes, to thicken, then add the melted butter substitute and salt. Stir in 2 cups of the cooked quinoa until evenly coated.
- Divide the mixture evenly among the 18 muffin pan wells, using a greased quarter-cup measure to pat it in, lining the bottom and sides of each well generously as the crusts will shrink a bit as they bake. Bake for 10 minutes until firm, then let cool.

Meanwhile, make the filling:

- Melt the tablespoon of butter substitute in a large skillet over medium heat. Stir in the onion and cook for a few minutes, until translucent. Add the mushrooms and cook until softened, then stir in the spinach and cook just until it has wilted. Add half the dried spice mix, stirring until well incorporated. Let cool, then transfer to a cutting board and coarsely chop.
- Place the drained tofu in a 4-cup liquid measuring cup or separate bowl. Use a hand mixer or immersion blender to eliminate any lumps. On low speed, beat in the eggs, light cream, the remaining dried spice mix, and the nutmeg until well combined.
- Place equal amounts of the cooked/chopped vegetables in each quinoa crust, making sure not to fill them more than one-third full. Sprinkle the shredded cheese over each portion of vegetables, then pour the tofu-egg mixture evenly over the cheese, being careful not to overfill (some quinoa crust should remain uncovered at the edges). Bake for 25 minutes until just set, then remove from the oven just long enough to sprinkle more shredded cheese on top of each quiche. Return to the oven and bake for another 10 to 15 minutes, until the cheese has melted. Let cool, then carefully dislodge the quiches from the pan.

NOTE: To make your own dried spice mix, combine ½ teaspoon each garlic powder, onion powder, salt, and freshly cracked black pepper.