

Amaranth sprouts

(Source: <https://markitonutrition.com>)

Known for its amazing protein and high fiber content, **Amaranth**, a tiny gluten-free pseudo grain, is a nutrition powerhouse among its peers. Amaranth is unique because it qualifies as a complete protein and, compared to all of the cereals, contains the highest levels of the amino acid lysine. A 1993 study from the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama concluded that the protein in amaranth *“is among the highest in nutritive quality of vegetable origin.”* A previous study out of Peru showed that amaranth would be especially healthy for children, indicating that *“if amaranths were available at a reasonable cost, they could represent a major component of the diets of children in the developing world.”*

Amaranth is not a true cereal grain and is therefore called a pseudo-cereal because it belongs to a different plant species. Ancient pseudo grains, such as amaranth, have a similar nutrient profile to that of cereals and have been used by Central American civilizations for thousands of years. Amaranth is known to have been a staple food crop of the Aztec royalty who believed that it had magical properties that would give them amazing strength, and that it **contained the secret to prolonged life and energy**. Known to the Aztecs as “huauhtli”, amaranth was not only the foundation of their diet – believed to have represented up to 80% of their caloric consumption- but was also the mystical centre of their culture and was used in spiritual ceremonies. The Spanish conquests of the 16th century resulted in a ban of amaranth and the crops were replaced with wheat and corn. Anyone caught growing amaranth was put to death. Nevertheless, amaranth – which is Greek for “unfading flower”- survived because spiritual Aztec leaders continued to grow it in secret.

Not only healthy and boasting a colourful history, amaranth is also a very tasty, nutty, slightly sweet and tiny sprout that can be used in a variety of recipes from [stews](#) to salads, breakfast cereals and even sprouted bread. Simply put, your creativity is the limit of what you can do with it. Amaranth may also be popped like popcorn for a quick snack. Like all grains and legumes, it is best to sprout amaranth before consumption to greatly enhance its beneficial properties. Ancient pseudo grains such as amaranth, teff and millet are some of the **easiest to digest, high protein, gluten-free alternatives to regular grains**. And while adding amaranth to your diet may not automatically turn you into an Aztec ancient warrior, it's a step in the right direction...

The studies listed below were summarized by the Whole Grains Council and highlight a few more reasons why adding amaranth to your diet makes a lot of sense:

AMARANTH MAY HAVE CANCER-PREVENTING, ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PROPERTIES

Molecular biologists in Mexico set out to study the bioactive peptides in amaranth and, in 2008, were the first to report presence of a lunasin-like peptide in the protein in amaranth. Lunasin is a peptide previously identified in soybeans and is widely thought to have cancer-preventive benefits as well as possibly blocking inflammation that accompanies several chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Additional bioactive peptides in amaranth protein were found to have antihypertensive properties. *[Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry](#), February 27, 2008; 56(4):1233-40. Epub January 23, 2008.*

AMARANTH BENEFITS PATIENTS WITH CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

Russian researchers used a 1996 study conducted on chickens as a model to determine whether or not amaranth would also show benefits for patients with cardiovascular

disease (CVD). Patients who presented with coronary heart disease and hypertension not only showed benefits from the inclusion of amaranth in their diets, researchers also saw a decrease in the amounts of total cholesterol, triglycerides, and LDL significantly. *Lipids in Health and Disease*, January 5, 2007; 6:1. DOI:10.1186/1476-511X-6-1.

COMMONLY GROWN AMARANTH HIGHEST IN PHYTOSTEROLS

University of Guelph researchers in Ontario, Canada found that amaranth can be a rich dietary source of phytosterols, which have cholesterol-lowering properties. Of the four varieties tested, the top results came from *Amaranthus K343*, often called Plainsman, the most commonly cultivated amaranth in the United States. *Plant Foods for Human Nutrition*, 2003; 58(3):207-11.

Nutritional info:

Vitamins A, B, C & E

Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Niacin, Phosphorus, Potassium

Omega 3 , Fiber, Antioxidants

Amino Acids (most complete protein of all grains)

Protein: 15%

Traditionally Used for:

- Glucose levels
- Diabetes
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Gluten free alternative to grains
- Weight loss
- Energy
- Detox