



GEORGOFILI WORLD

Newsletter of the Georgofili Accademy

TEFF NUTRITIONAL QUALITY AND HEALTH BENEFITS

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April 15 2015



Teff is not only a gluten free crop, it's recognized as the "Next Super Grain" containing about 73% starch, 11% protein, 3% fiber and 3% ash. The interesting morphological feature of teff grain is that the whole grain is processed without removing the seed coat which is rich in several health promoting compounds such as phenolics, fibers and other bioactive

compounds. Studies conducted by isolating the cell walls from teff grains showed that more than 50% of the phenolics, which are responsible for its antioxidant potential, are found bounded to the cell wall. In connection to this, dietary consumption of whole grains has been shown to contribute to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, obesity and cancer. The essential amino acid profile of teff is reported to be better than that found in wheat, sorghum and finger millet. The mineral contents especially iron, zinc, calcium and copper are also better than that found in sorghum, wheat and rice. Realizing its superior nutritional quality over the commonly utilized cereals, recently, teff is included as an ingredient in many homemade and commercial complementary foods for infants and children. Teff grain is milled and used to prepare *injera*, a fermented spongy flat bread.

It is served along with stew made from spices, meat, vegetables, root tubers and different legumes depending on the availability in every household. *Injera* is consumed at least once in a day by many Ethiopians especially in the urban areas who can afford to buy as the price of teff at this time is rising very high due to the increasing export trading. Recently teff is spread throughout the world especially in the US, Australia and some European countries such as Netherlands and Germany. In those countries the crop is used to prepare bread, pasta, cookies and crackers along with other cereals like wheat.