

AMARANTHUS

AMARANTHUS was used by the Aztecs, who referred to it as *huautli*, and other Native America people in Mexico to prepare ritual drinks and foods. To this day, amaranth grains are toasted much like popcorn and mixed with honey or molasses to make a treat called *alegría* (literally "happiness" in Spanish).

Amaranth was used in several Aztec ceremonies, where images of their gods (notably Huitzilopochtli) were made with amaranth mixed with honey. The images were cut to be eaten by the people. Because the Roman Catholic priests felt this tradition too closely resembled the Christian communion, they banned the cultivation of the grain for centuries.

Because of its importance as a symbol of indigenous culture, and because it is very palatable, easy to cook, and its protein particularly well suited to human nutritional needs, interest in the grain amaranth (especially *A. cruentus* and *A. hypochondriacus*) was revived in the 1970s. It was recovered in Mexico from wild varieties and is now commercially cultivated. It is a popular snack sold in Mexico City and other parts of Mexico, sometimes mixed with chocolate or puffed rice, and its use has spread to Europe and other parts of North America. Amaranth and quinoa are called pseudograins because of their flavor and cooking similarities to grains. These are dicot plant seeds, and both contain exceptionally complete protein for plant sources. Besides protein, amaranth grain provides a good source of dietary fiber and dietary minerals such as iron, magnesium, phosphorus, copper, and especially manganese.

Information taken from Wikipedia.org