

“Please pass the Quinoa!” Oprah Winfrey

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If you haven't heard of the super grain, Quinoa, than you aren't watching television shows such as Oprah, or reading magazines like Midweek, MSN, or Men's Health. It means you don't have a copy of the Canada Health Food Guide or one of the hundreds of health focused recipe books currently on the market.

This super nutritious, gluten-free grain is quickly becoming an international super food and has a Kamsack connection. Well, connection might be understating it a bit. Kamsack is proud to be the home of Northern Quinoa Corporation, www.quinoa.com, Canada's only “grower & producer” of quinoa.

One might ask how did a company like this locate to a place like Kamsack? Well, it had to do with location and opportunity. For owner, Joe Dutchshen, “we started in Kamsack because that's where we lived & grew up.” He, along with a group of area producers and business men, started the business in 1995. They were intrigued by agronomic and nutritional values of the Quinoa seed. They realized that our North-

eastern Saskatchewan climate was similar to its indigenous locale of the Andes Mountains in South America making it suitable for its cultivation. Also, at that time the gym of the original Kamsack Comprehensive Institute (our high school) was up for sale and so, Northern Quinoa Corporation began.

Quinoa has been referred to as “The Grain of the Gods”, “The Mother Grain”, “One of the world's most perfect foods”, and by United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization as “a source closer to the ideal protein balance than any other grain”. A Google search brings up thousands of hits related to this fantastic little seed.

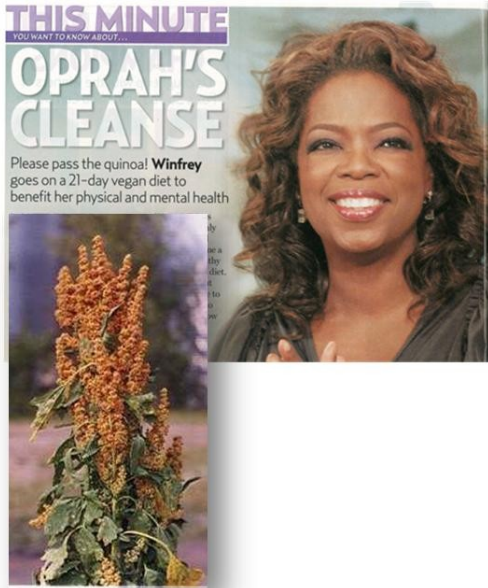
For Joe, Quinoa was just being re-introduced into our markets in 1995. Out of necessity, they added other organic & gluten free grains and flours to their product line. They imported and exported their products around the world including Korea, China, Mexico, US, Europe and throughout Canada. They began packaging store ready products under the NorQuin Brand label, one such product being the omega 3 rich grain, flax.

This is when Joe's son, Michael, continues the international story his father had started. Michael graduated with a Commerce Degree in 2003 and once he was done, attended a tradeshow in Mexico with the NQC manager of the day, Sheldon Vanin. Their goal was to get NorQuin Brand Flaxseed into the supermarkets of Mexico. Their first trip seemed too cumbersome. “If we're going to do this, we need to speak Spanish”, said Vanin.



Michael, undaunted by the task, decided to stay behind determined to have his Kamsack product sold in Mexico. Soon into his expedition, he met up with Beatriz Gomez, a local girl, now New York trained artist, at a décor store she and a girlfriend were running. They originally met at the tradeshow through friends. She agreed to help Michael with his Spanish and quickly gained an interest into the product. She, too, began to work with Michael in





Mexico.

“It was tough”, said Michael, “we had to start from scratch.” Once they got their product approved in Mexico, they began to sell to small stores and soon into supermarkets such as GNC, HEB or Soriana. Northern Quinoa became the first company to ever sell pre-packaged flax in major Mexican supermarkets.

Many other companies have followed and competition is very tough. “We have a huge following,” said Michael. To date, the NorQuin Brand is the only complete product of Canada being sold in Mexico. “They seek our quality and because of that we experience repeat customer business of approximately 50%,” said Michael.

Michael & Beatriz are currently working at selling their Quinoa down in Mexico. Should they be successful, Northern Quinoa will, once again, be the first company to sell pre-packaged quinoa in supermarkets in Mexico. “We have the customers waiting,” said Michael.

Northern Quinoa Corporation provides an alternative crop for area producers. Our goal is to have quinoa growers radiate from the Kamsack area. For more information about producing quinoa, go to their website www.quinoa.com.

Locally, NorQuin Brand products are available at Kamsack local grocery stores and at their office store located in the old RCMP station at 428 Third Street or their online store www.quinoa.com.

...Because once wasn't enough!



NQC Staff (l-r): Michael Dutcheshen, Beatriz Gomez, Rita Brock and Joe Dutcheshen.