

# seared scallops on black quinoa with pomegranate gastrique

*Serves 4*

I don't often approach cooking with many rules. Opinions certainly, but not rules. But scallops are one ingredient that I find benefits from the following three easy rules: always use fresh, not previously frozen, scallops; cook them the day of purchase; and cook your dry scallops in a hot liquid or fat for a good sear.

This gorgeous recipe is the kind of dinner you could make for company, thanks to the beautiful black quinoa salad studded with teeny jewels of tart pomegranate seeds. I find that scallops have a creaminess that contrasts particularly well with the tart gastrique, but the sweet, acidic flavors are versatile enough to go with any protein. If you don't care for scallops, grill up some tofu spears, chicken breasts, or flank steak. Fresh seafood deteriorates quickly, so I suggest seeking out a reputable fishmonger and cooking the scallops as soon as you can. Any pieces with a shiny film or a "fishy" smell aren't fresh.

The gastrique can be made a day in advance; after that, this recipe comes together fairly quickly. I use black quinoa for aesthetic reasons, but you could use the white or red variety instead. If you're wanting a bit of a salty bite, toss some finely crumbled feta into the quinoa.

16 large scallops  
1 cup black quinoa  
1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cups low-sodium vegetable broth  
1 medium fennel bulb  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh chives, plus more for garnish  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper  
2 tablespoons coconut oil or ghee, or more as needed  
1 cup pomegranate seeds  
Handful of microgreens

## **pomegranate gastrique**

1 tablespoon honey  
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar  
1 cup pomegranate juice  
3/4 cup low-sodium vegetable broth

Remove the scallops from the fridge to rest at room temperature.

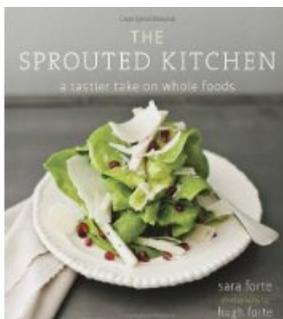
To make the gastrique, in a saucepan over medium heat, warm the honey and vinegar, stirring to combine. Add the pomegranate juice, bring the mixture to a gentle boil, and cook until reduced by half, about 8 minutes. Add the vegetable broth and reduce in half again, another 6 to 8 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Rinse the quinoa in a fine-mesh strainer. In a saucepan, bring the vegetable broth to a simmer over medium heat, add the quinoa, cover, and cook until the liquid is absorbed, 16 to 18 minutes. While the quinoa is cooking, remove the fronds from the fennel and reserve a small handful. Core and slice the fennel bulb as thinly as possible, using a mandoline if you have one. Coarsely chop the reserved fronds. Once the quinoa is cooked, transfer it to a mixing bowl. Add the fronds, the sliced fennel bulb, olive oil, and chives to the quinoa and stir.

Pat the scallops completely dry and sprinkle all sides with salt and pepper. Heat the coconut oil in a large frying pan over medium-high heat and add as many scallops as will fit in the pan while leaving 1 to 2 inches between them. Cook for 4 minutes, flip, and cook on the other side until a crust has formed and the scallop starts to pull away from the pan, about 2 to 3 minutes more, depending on the size of the scallops. The key to getting a good crust on the scallops is to make sure they are close to room temperature and completely dry when they hit the hot pan. Don't touch them besides flipping them once. There is no need to stir them around; that's when things get messy. Repeat with the remaining scallops, adding a bit more coconut oil to the pan if it all has been absorbed.

Stir the pomegranate seeds and microgreens into the quinoa mixture, adding a few pinches of salt and pepper to taste.

To serve, divide the quinoa salad and scallops among four plates and drizzle each serving with the gastrique. Garnish with chives and serve immediately.



From *The Sprouted Kitchen: A Tastier Take on Whole Foods* by Sara Forte, Ten Speed Press (August 28, 2012), ISBN: 1607741148