



LA SEMILLA
LEARN · GROW · INSPIRE



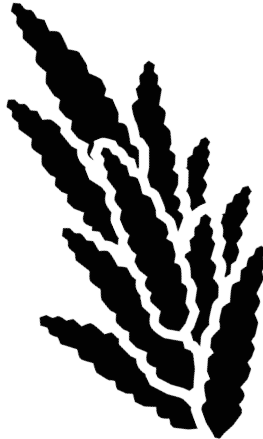
EDIBLE
EDUCATION

Ancestral Foods Lessons:

Amaranth

ALIMENTOS ANCESTRALES: AMARANTO

Created by / Creado por: Rubi Orozco Santos



LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER

2022

LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER

101 E. Joy Dr.

Anthony, NM 88021

(575) 882-2393

www.lasemillafoodcenter.org

facebook.com/lasemillafoodcenter

[@lasemillafoodcenter](https://twitter.com/lasemillafoodcenter)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Rubi is a lifelong student of elders, poets, and writers in both the US and Mexico, and holds a graduate degree in community health from UC Berkeley. She serves as Director of Storytelling and Development at La Semilla Food Center in Anthony, NM. Through that role, she spearheads efforts to uplift the foodways wisdom of people of the Paso del Norte region and increase connection with the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem. She worked with La Semilla's Policy Director V Quevedo and illustrator/editor Zeke Peña to create the zine *Food, Land, and Us: A Look at the Farm Bill from the Paso del Norte Region*.

Her documentary poetry book, *Inventos Míos*, is inspired by the history of nixtamalization and its current practice in the El Paso region. It received the 2019 Tejas Poetry Book Award from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. Her work has been featured in podcasts such *Proof* (from *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister*, and *Words on a Wire*.

BIOGRAFIA DE LA AUTORA

Durante su vida, Rubi ha sido la estudiante de poetas, escritores, maestras y maestros tanto en los Estados Unidos como en México, y tiene un título posgrado en Salud Comunitaria de UC Berkley. Ella es Directora de Narración y Desarrollo en La Semilla Food Center en Anthony, NM. Liderando los esfuerzos para elevar la sabiduría de los hábitos alimenticios de la gente de la región Paso del Norte y aumentar la conexión con el ecosistema del desierto de Chihuahua. Rubi trabajó con la Directora de Política de La Semilla, V Quevedo, y el ilustrador/editor Zeke Peña en la creación de la revista *Comida, Tierra y Nosotros: Un Vistazo al Proyecto de Ley Agrícola desde la Región del Paso del Norte*.

Su libro de poesía documental, *Inventos Míos*, esta inspirado en la historia de la nixtamalización y su practica actual en la región de El Paso. En el 2019, recibió el premio Tejas Poetry Book Award de la Asociación Nacional de los Estudios Chicanas y Chicanos. El trabajo de Rubi ha aparecido en podcasts como *Proof*(de *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister* y *Words on a Wire*.



Get Ready for Amaranth!



Hello! You are going to learn about amaranth. Here are 4 things to keep in mind before you start.

Listen to your body

As you work, listen to your body. If you get frustrated, take 3 slow and deep breaths. You can ask for help. You can take a break.

Be kind with your heart

You will learn a story that may make you feel sad or angry. It may also make you feel proud and inspired. It is O.K. to feel many things at once. You can draw or write about how you feel on the last page of this packet.

Clean up

When you are done, clean up. Clean the table. Put trash in the garbage can.

Have fun!

Plants are fun! You are fun! Stay curious.

AMARANTH AND ME

Have you ever tasted amaranth? Have you ever seen it? Have you heard about it? Write what you know about amaranth. If you do not know anything about amaranth, write what you want to learn.





Story and Uses of Amaranth

Amaranth is a traditional food of Mexican people. Its original name is Huautli in the Nahuatl language. Can you say Huautli? It sounds like WOW-tee.

The Indigenous people of what is now Mexico ate amaranth every day, just like beans, corn, squash, chilies, and tomato. People cooked with it. They grew it in their gardens. They grew it in their community farms. They also prayed with it. Warriors ate amaranth to keep strong.

When the Spanish came to North America, they wanted the land of Indigenous people. They called it New Spain. They wanted Indigenous people to change their beliefs. They wanted them to pray in different ways, without amaranth or other plants. They wanted the warriors to be weak to be able to defeat them. So, they banned amaranth. They burned the amaranth fields. They punished people who got caught with amaranth seeds by cutting off their hands or killing them.

People were afraid. Many stopped growing amaranth. Without growing it, they could not teach their kids how to grow it and use it. Many people forgot about amaranth. But some people grew it in hiding and saved it.





Indigenous people fought to be free from Spain. They won. The country changed names from New Spain to Mexico. After that, people were able to share amaranth again.



Thanks to the brave seed-keepers who kept growing amaranth when it was illegal, we can enjoy it today. Amaranth is delicious and very healthy.

We can eat the leaves when the plants are young - they are called 'amaranth greens.' They are similar to spinach - we can eat them raw or cooked. We can eat the seeds, or grain, when the flower blooms and dries. The grain can be boiled as is, or puffed, or ground into a flour.

Amaranth has a lot of nutrients. It has calcium, which keeps our bones strong. It has iron, which keeps our blood healthy. It has protein, which helps us make healthy muscles. And it has other nutrients that help us grow and think. It is easy to digest.

Amaranth is drought-tolerant, which means it can survive without a lot of water. That's important for people who live in places that don't have a lot of water, like the Chihuahuan desert.



How does amaranth help our bodies?

In this activity, we will compare the amount of protein, calcium and iron in different foods. Protein helps our bodies make healthy muscles. Calcium helps us make strong bones. Iron helps us have healthy blood. See the nutrient content of the following foods.

Raw Amaranth Greens (100g)

Protein: 2.46 grams
Calcium: 215 milligrams
Iron: 2.32 milligrams

Cooked Amaranth Greens (100g)

Protein: 2.11 grams
Calcium: 209 milligrams
Iron: 2.26 milligrams

Nonfat Milk (100g)

Protein: 3.33 grams
Calcium: 125 milligrams
Iron: 0 milligrams

Cooked Amaranth Grain (100g)

Protein: 3.80 grams
Calcium: 47 milligrams
Iron: 2.10 milligrams

Pinto Beans (100g)

Protein: 20.45 grams
Calcium: 91 milligrams
Iron: 4.09 milligrams

Cooked Spinach (100g)

Protein: 2.98 grams
Calcium: 124 milligrams
Iron: 1.48 milligrams

From the list above, which food has the most **calcium** to help us make strong bones?

From the list above, which **two** foods have the most **iron** to help us have healthy blood?

From the list above, which **two** foods have the most **protein** to help us make healthy muscles?



FOOD SAMPLE

Dulce de Alegría

When amaranth is placed on a hot clay skillet, it jumps and puffs up. People say that it is jumping with joy, and call it 'alegría.' You are about to enjoy a traditional Mexican candy made out of puffed amaranth called 'dulce de alegría' – which means, 'candy of joy.'



This candy has roots in ancient Mexico, when people made figurines with puffed amaranth as part of special celebrations.



As you eat it, watch two videos to learn how amaranth is helping Mexican people stay connected to their history, improve their health, and help create economic opportunities.



Go to YouTube and search for:

- "10 Years Working with Amaranth in Oaxaca" by Puente Mexico (4 minutes, 17 seconds).
- "El Otro Mexico: El Amaranto" by Carolina Rocha Menocal (5 minutes, 33 seconds). This video is in Spanish. If you don't understand Spanish, you will still be able to appreciate how amaranth is traditionally grown and transformed into alegría.



AMAZING AMARANTH

Write or draw your answers.

Write the original name of amaranth. (Hint: It is in Nahuatl. You can find it in the 'Story and Uses of Amaranth' page of this packet).

List one way amaranth is good for our bodies.

Why is amaranth an important plant for people who live in the desert?



JOURNAL

Learning about amaranth can be like learning about a long lost relative. There might be joy and also some sadness. What did you think of the amaranth story? How did it make you feel? **Write or draw anything you remember or want to express about the amaranth story.**

