

Another species, *Chenopodium berlandieri*, is one of four plants that were actually domesticated in the Eastern Woodlands of North America prior to the introduction and wide utilization of corn (maize). The oldest examples of domesticated *Chenopodium berlandieri* predate 3500 B.P. The third domesticate, *Chenopodium berlandieri* subsp. *nuttalliae* (Huazontle) was grown in Mexico, and is now grown commercially for its colorful (green and red) leafy foliage. Served in salads at restaurants, it now goes by the moniker, Red Aztec Spinach. The Aztec actually utilized different cultivars of this plant for the greens and the abundant fruits that were produced on tall flower stalks.



The wild type of *Chenopodium berlandieri* is the best studied of all the members of the genus. The foliage is rich in calcium and vitamin A, comparable to spinach.

Nutritional studies are not available for wild-type seeds of *Chenopodium*, but studies of quinoa indicate it is comparable to wheat in energy and superior in protein because it contains more lysine and a well-balance suite of amino acids. It lacks gluten, a

common allergen found in wheat. It is also higher in calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, iron, copper, manganese, and zinc than any of the cereal grasses (rice, wheat, barley, oats, or corn/maize).

Aztecs prepared high protein dishes using the immature bright red seed heads and leaves. Although cultivation of the species died out in eastern North America, the plant continues to be grown as a domesticated crop in Mexico, though its cultivation has been declining. There are three varieties of the subspecies which are grown as a pseudocereal, as a leaf vegetable, and for its broccoli-like flowering shoots, respectively. Huazontle grow just about everywhere. They're found throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. They grow in fields, forests, sidewalks. Huazontles are a great example of modern society's ability to pick and choose forage weeds.



Huazontles in Morita Sauce

(appetizers)

Ingredients

- 1 pound huazontle bud clusters (the tops, with stems and leaves removed)
- 1 cup herb seasoning stuffing mix
- 1/2 cup Oaxaca cheese, shredded
- 2 tablespoon maize flour
- 3 well beaten eggs

1/2 tsp Thyme

Vegetable oil for deep frying

Blanch Huazontle florets in boiling water for 20 minutes, cool and gently press out excess water, between paper towels, being careful not to break up the bud clusters. Combine all ingredients and set aside. Then, beat egg whites until stiff; add maize flour until you create a luscious batter. Form into balls about 1 1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Then drape the balls in the batter and shallow fry until crisp and golden. Fry 3 or 4 balls at a time, taking care not to crowd the pan too much. Cook until golden, about 4 to 6 minutes; drain on paper towels.