CHIA SEEDS: The Nutrient Dense Super Seed

Chia seeds are derived from the Salvia hispanica plant, a member of the Mint Family. Dr. Jack Bukowski of the Harvard School of Medicine stated, “It has a remarkable nutrient profile. We haven’t seen anything like this before.” The Agricultural Research Service (ARS), part of the US Department of Agriculture, has determined that chia is a "High-ORAC Food" based on its significant antioxidant properties. Such foods have earned high scores in an analysis called Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity, or ORAC, which measures the total antioxidant power of foods and other substances (i.e., their ability to protect cells and their components from oxidative damage). This is especially true of black chia seeds. According to the ARS website, “Early findings suggest that eating plenty of high-ORAC [foods] may help slow the processes associated with aging in both body and brain.” In studies, such foods are shown to:

• Boost the antioxidant power of the blood
• Prevent long-term memory loss
• Support healthy brain function as we age
• Protect blood vessels from oxygen damage

CHIA SEEDS: Profile

✓ Richest known whole food source of both fiber and Omega-3 fatty acids
✓ A complete source of dietary protein, with all the essential amino acids, in an easily digestible form
✓ A more bioavailable protein source than soy
✓ 2 times the protein of any other seed or grain
✓ 5 grams of fiber in just 1 tablespoon
✓ More than 5 times the amount of calcium of whole milk
✓ 3 times the antioxidant power of blueberries
✓ 15 times more magnesium than broccoli
✓ More vitamin C than oranges
✓ 2 times the amount of potassium as bananas
✓ 3 times more iron than spinach
✓ Vitamins A, B, C & E
✓ High in boron (a trace mineral that helps transfer calcium into your bones), folate, zinc, selenium
✓ Low-carbohydrate, low-calorie, zero sugars—and act to keep blood sugar level
✓ No cholesterol and gluten-free
✓ Aid intestinal regularity
✓ Provide energy and increase endurance
CHIA SEEDS: Storage

Chia seeds can easily be stored dry for 4-5 years without deterioration in flavor, odor or nutritional value.

CHIA SEEDS: Uses & Recipes

- The most common way to eat chia is to first soak the seeds. They can very rapidly absorb a large amount of liquid—between 9-12 times their volume, in under 10 minutes.
- To make a basic chia gel, simply add 1/3 cup of seeds (2 oz) to 2 cups of water. Stir the mixture well to avoid clumping, then leave it in your fridge in a sealed jar. This mixture will yield around 17 ounces of chia gel. You can begin to eat the gel almost immediately if you like. Just 10 minutes is enough time for the gel to be formed. More of the nutrients will be easily accessible after a few hours, so many people like to make up a batch like this and leave it in the fridge. It will stay good for about three weeks. Take out some of the ready-made gel whenever you need it. You might add it to smoothies, mix it with salad dressings, puddings or granola, or simply take it by the spoonful.
- You can sprinkle the dry seeds on salads or add them to granola mixes. You may also want to experiment with grinding them first in a coffee grinder, to make a “chia flour” that you can then add to smoothies, soups and many of your favorite foods.
- You can substitute chia seeds in any recipe that calls for flax.
- Try this recipe for “Chia Gel Muesli”: 1 cup of basic chia gel, 2 bananas mashed with a fork, 1 tbsp of lucuma powder (optional), ¼ cup of raisins, and ¼ cup of pumpkin seeds. With a fork, mix the ingredients together in a bowl, and then enjoy!
- “Chia Fresca”—it’s still a popular drink in modern-day Mexico: 2 tsp of chia seeds, 10 ounces of water, the juice of one lemon or lime, and agave syrup or raw honey to taste. Simply stir the ingredients together and enjoy!

Resources:

The information provided above was compiled from:
The Magic of Chia by James Scheer
Chia: Rediscovering a Forgotten Crop of the Aztecs by Ricardo Ayere Jr. and Wayne Coates.