



Chia

Magic Seeds

by The Sacred Chef

Chia seed's high oil content makes it the richest vegetable source for Omega 3 essential fatty acids.

This is no 'Jack and the bean stalk magic seed story' - but there are some parallels with reaching a giant nutritional understanding from what appear to be very little seeds. There is an exciting buzz about Chia seeds, and the more I researched, the more I discovered that there is good reason to get excited.

They are like little black and white magic granules, that you can sprinkle over ordinary food, to make it like Jack's beanstalk - extraordinary! These seeds are an ancient superfood rediscovered, and we now have the science to understand their incredible properties, and to explain the magic. Chia is also being grown in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, making it an Australian superfood.

Chia (*Salvia Hispanica*), a plant of the *Salvia* genus in the Mint family, originated in the Valley of Mexico and was traditionally cultivated by the Aztecs. The seeds of the Chia plant are incredibly rich in nutritional value. Chia was one of the Aztecs' most important food sources and had great value as a super food. It was said that the equivalent of a tablespoon of seeds could sustain a warrior for 24 hours. Due to its unusual properties, it was used as a medicine for both oral and topical applications. It was even used, as a monetary currency; such was the esteem with which it was held in Aztec culture.

Known as the running food, its use as an energy rich endurance food was well known amongst the Indians of south west Central America and Mexico. Chia was forcibly removed from the diet of the Indians by the conquering Spanish, because of its important cultural and religious links to their previously established kingdoms.

The chemical basis underpinning its qualities as an endurance food is revealed by the following experiment: if you add water to a teaspoon of Chia and leave it for half an hour you will find not seeds in water, but an almost solid gelatinous mass, due to the soluble fibre (mucilage or long chain polysaccharides) in Chia. The same process is thought to occur in the stomach once we have ingested Chia. This gel then forms a physical barrier between the carbohydrates

and the digestive enzymes that break them down, slowing down their conversion to sugars. Similar to a sustained release vitamin pill, the energy is available for a longer period, and the metabolic changes are stabilised - avoiding the highs and lows commonly associated with digestion. Chia would have positive effects for diabetics.

Chia also has the ability to absorb twelve times its own mass in water, and this hydrophilic quality helps you to remain hydrated for longer. With the vital importance of fluids and electrolytes to healthy cell life throughout our body, the Chia seed's ability to help the body regulate its absorption of nutrients and fluids, becomes a wonderful natural helper in keeping a healthy cellular balance. Chia seed's hydrophilic colloidal qualities can aid in the digestion of foods that may cause indigestion or heart burn in some people.

Chia seed's high oil content makes it the richest vegetable source for Omega 3 essential fatty acids - a great tool in the vital restoration of balance to a diet containing an over-consumption of Omega 6 fatty acids. Both are important but many people have diets with twenty times the amount of Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acids present. Chia seeds are rich in the unsaturated fat; linoleic, which our body cannot produce itself, and a diet rich in this helps us to absorb Vitamins A, D, E & K. It also helps in the respiration of our vital organs and in the distribution of oxygen through the blood stream to all cells, tissues and organs.

Unsaturated fatty acids are essential for healthy glandular function, in particular the adrenal and thyroid glands. Chia seeds also contain long chain triglycerides, which can help

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to reduce cholesterol on arterial walls. Chia is a rich source of calcium, as it contains the mineral; boron, which aids the body in absorbing calcium from foods.

Chia is an incredibly versatile food, due to its ability to absorb large amounts of water and become a gel. The Chia frappe is probably one of the best known yummy applications and here is a selection of recipes to delight your palate.



Vietnamese Rice Paper Rolls with Sate Sauce

Dipping Sauce.

Mix in a large bowl.
 1 packet rice noodles-
 rehydrated.
 1 tbsp minced fresh ginger
 2 tsp chia seeds
 2 tsp black pepper
 2 cups chopped fresh coriander
 1 cup chopped fresh mint
 ½ cup soy sauce
 1 tbsp sesame oil
 ½ cup fresh lime juice
 1 tbsp fish sauce
 1 cup julienned celery
 2 cups bean shoots
 1 cup julienned red capsicum
 1 cup julienned carrots
 ½ cup minced Spanish onion
 1 packet rice paper wrappers-
 rehydrated

Roll mix into finger shaped rolls.

Sate Sauce

In a saucepan gently heat and whisk together until creamy.
 1 tbsp minced ginger
 1 tbsp minced garlic
 4 minced red chillies
 ½ cup soya sauce
 2 tsp palm sugar
 1 cup peanut butter
 1 can coconut milk

“Chia seeds are fantastic sprinkled over rice noodles in your Vietnamese rice paper rolls.”

Chia, Fetta Bran Muffins

1 cup wholemeal plain flour
 1 ½ cups wholemeal SR flour
 2 tsp chia seeds
 ½ cup bran flakes
 1 tsp baking powder
 1 tsp sea salt
 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
 1 tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary
 1 tsp grated lemon peel
 200g unsalted butter
 4 whole 60g free range eggs
 1 cup soy milk or alternative
 2 medium sized brown onions roughly chopped & liberally braised in olive oil
 1 cup parmesan grated
 1 cup crumbled sheep's fetta
 1 tbsp chopped fresh basil

Preheat oven to 180C.

Grease muffin trays & or line trays with muffin cases. Sift flours & dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl. Either rub in softened butter by hand to this dry mix or whizz together in a food processor until you achieve a breadcrumb-like consistency. In a separate bowl whisk eggs, soy milk, lemon peel & herbs, before folding in fetta & parmesan cheeses & cooled braised onions. Slowly & gently fold this wet mixture into the dry ingredients. Add in extra grind of black pepper & sea salt. When thoroughly mixed spoon cake like mix into individual muffin rings. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean.

Chia Avocado & Honey Frappe

Blend : ½ cup chia gel
 1 peeled deseeded ripe avocado
 1 tbsp honey
 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper
 2 cups soya milk
 1 cup crushed ice

Chia Chai Tea Frappe

Blend : 1 tbsp chai syrup
 ½ cup chia gel
 2 cups soya milk
 1 cup crushed ice

Chia Berry Smoothie

Blend : ½ cup chia gel
 1 cup fresh or frozen mixed berries
 ½ cup yoghurt
 1 tspn honey
 2 cups soy milk.



“With a mild slightly nutty flavour, Chia seeds are great sprinkled over salads, added to cakes, muffins, breads and just about anything else you can think of.”