

Recipe ideas

COSTCO MEMBER ADAM Gilbert, head weight-loss coach at MyBodyTutor.com, adds chia seeds to egg white **omelets** for their health benefits. He points out that they're incredibly versatile: "You can put them on **salads**, add them to protein **shakes**, sprinkle them onto **cereal** or even mix them in **yogurt**." Dietitian Jennifer McDaniel likes to add about a tablespoon of chia seeds to **oatmeal**, **pancakes** and even peanut butter **cookies**. You can also substitute chia seeds for eggs when baking, an easy way to add fiber to your diet. Simply grind the chia seeds in a food processor or coffee grinder. Replace each egg with a tablespoon of finely ground seeds and three tablespoons of water. Nutritionist Kurtis Frank points out that you can also substitute chia seeds for up to a quarter of the oil used in baking without significantly changing the flavor.—YG

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iron compared to flax, hemp, sunflower, pumpkin and sesame seeds. A quarter cup of chia seeds contains around 8 mg of iron. Chia seeds also boast world-class fiber content: 10 grams in a quarter cup. When it comes to calcium content, chia seeds (at 180 mg per quarter pound) come in second only to sesame seeds.

Chia seeds are also rich in healthy omega-3 fats and contain more alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) than any other known plant. "ALA is anti-inflammatory, helps support the cell membranes and may stop cholesterol from getting too high," Frank says. ALA also supports heart health and lowers inflammation in the body.

Chia seeds have proven health benefits, according to McDaniel: "Small studies showed that people saw improvements in blood pressure, inflammation and blood sugar regulation after 12 weeks of taking a little more than a quarter cup of chia seeds per day. Their nutritional profile helps lower certain risk factors."

The conclusion? Eating chia seeds can provide a huge boost in your everyday nutrition. And you don't ever have to scrape them off the back of a terra-cotta statue. *Those* seeds haven't been approved by the Food and Drug Administration as food. [E]

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Ch-ch-ch-chia!

Tiny chia seeds pack a big punch

By Yael Grauer

DID YOU KNOW that the tiny black specks you sprinkle on the backs of Chia Pets are actually edible seeds? Chia seeds are a nutritional powerhouse, with a tasty, nutty flavor—though eating terra-cotta pets is not recommended.

"These tiny little seeds that people used in the past to just grow funny plants can give us a pretty good boost in nutritional benefits if we add them to our everyday diet," said Jennifer McDaniel, registered dietitian and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The desert plant chia, or *Salvia hispanica*, is botanically related to mint. This plant's got history. Aztec soldiers consumed chia as part of their daily rations. Native American tribes such as the Chumash and the Tarahumara have long used it during distance running.

"They'd soak the seeds for a couple of

hours, and it'd turn into a gluey, gooey substance," McDaniel says. Then they drank the chia water, called chia fresca, for hydration. The seeds are highly absorbent, retaining up to 27 times their weight in water. This gelatinous concoction slowly releases its liquid, hydrating those who consume it.

Many now believe that the black seeds boost athletic power. "They give you a lot of calories, they go down easy and they don't disturb your digestion at all, which is perfect for running," says nutritionist Kurtis Frank, a researcher at Examine.com.

Unlike flaxseeds, their nutritional counterpart, chia seeds do not have to be ground into meal (although they are often ground for certain recipes; see top right) or kept refrigerated; they stay fresh a lot longer.

Nutritionally, chia seeds top the charts in

Nutritional attributes

Chia seeds contain a variety of nutrients, including:

- Alpha-linolenic acid, a healthy omega-3 fatty acid
- Calcium, which strengthens bones and teeth
- Fiber, which controls blood sugar level and maintains bowel health
- Iron, which is responsible for carrying oxygen to muscles and organs
- Magnesium, which supports a healthy immune system and maintains normal muscle function
- Protein, which is crucial for cell repair—YG

The Costco Connection

Costco members will find a variety of healthy seeds and grains, including chia, flax, quinoa and more, at their local Costco.