

Add a Little Spice to Your Life!

Grab & Go Spice Kits for Adults: Chia Seeds

Do you love to cook? Do you like to try new flavors and recipes? Or maybe you are in a cooking rut and don't know how to start expanding your cooking repertoire. Let us help you get spicy in the kitchen. Your kit includes a pre-measured packet of chia seeds and a few recipes.

What are chia seeds? Chia seeds are small round seeds that can be black, brown or white in color. They are harvested from a flowering plant in the mint family known as *Salvia hispanica* which is native to parts of Mexico and Guatemala. Edible chia seeds are closely related to the chia plants made popular by Chia Pets, but they are not the same seed.

What are the health benefits of chia seeds? Chia seeds are an excellent source of vitamins, minerals and powerful antioxidants including caffeic acid and quercetin. One serving of chia seeds, which is 2 tablespoons or 1 ounce, contains approximately 140 calories, 4 grams of protein, 11 grams of fiber, 7 grams of unsaturated fat, 18% RDA for calcium, and trace minerals including zinc and copper. Chia seeds are the richest plant source of omega-3 fatty acids as well as a complete protein, containing all nine essential amino acids. Please note that eating too many chia seeds at once can lead to bloating and discomfort because of the high fiber content. Also, dry chia seeds can get stuck in your throat posing a choking hazard. To avoid this risk, soak the seeds 5 to 10 minutes before use.

Easy ways to add chia seeds to your diet. Chia seeds have a mild flavor so they can easily be incorporated into many dishes. Add a tablespoon or two to your favorite smoothie. Sprinkle some chia seeds on top of a salad, soup, or oatmeal. Mix chia seeds with breadcrumbs for breading of chicken, fish or meat. Also, chia seeds have a significant concentration of mucilage which is a natural substance that helps plants retain water. This makes it easy for chia seeds to act as a binder and/or a thickener when combined with moisture. Mix them into dressing and note that the longer the dressing sits, the thicker it will become. Cook them in a jam or fruit sauce to add thickness without additional flavor. To make a vegan replacement for eggs, combine 1 tbsp of chia seeds with 2 ½ tbsp of water, stir and rest for 5 minutes to thicken. Use the mixture in recipes for cookies, waffles, bread, and more. Chia seed pudding is one of the most popular ways to eat chia seeds. Below is a base recipe for 1 serving with some add in suggestions.

Base Chia Pudding Recipe - ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice), 2 tbsp chia seeds, 1 tbsp maple syrup (or alternative sweetener). In a bowl or mason jar, stir thoroughly to combine all the ingredients. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight. Once the chia seed pudding is nice and thick, remove from the fridge and give it a good stir. More milk can be added to change the consistency.

Chai Chia Pudding - ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice), 2 tbsp chia seeds, 1 tbsp maple syrup (or alternative sweetener), ¼ tsp ground cinnamon, pinch of nutmeg and ground cloves, 2 tsp chopped raisins.

Green Matcha and Coconut Chia Pudding - ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice), 2 tbsp chia seeds, 1 tbsp maple syrup (or alternative sweetener), 1 tsp green matcha powder, 2 tsp shredded coconut.

Banana Strawberry Chia Pudding - ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice), 2 tbsp chia seeds, 1 tbsp maple syrup (or alternative sweetener), 2 tbsp chopped banana, 2 tbsp chopped strawberries, dash of cinnamon.

Chocolate Chia Pudding - ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice), 2 tbsp chia seeds, 1 tbsp maple syrup (or alternative sweetener), 1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder, dash of cinnamon.

Need more inspiration?

You can watch a six-part Great Courses class called ***The Everyday Gourmet: Essential Secrets of Spices in Cooking*** for free with your library card by using a [Hoopla Great Courses BingePass](#) or streaming on [Kanopy](#).

See below for more recipes featuring chia seeds.

Almond, Berry, and Chia Smoothie

By Michael Symon

Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients

- 1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 2 cups spinach leaves
- 1 small peeled banana (fresh or frozen)
- 1 orange, peeled and chopped
- Juice of 1 lemon

Preparation

1. In a blender, combine all the ingredients and process until smooth.

Race Day Oatmeal 2

By Shalane Flanagan and Elyse Kopecky

Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients

- ½ cup instant oats
- 2 or 3 dates, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped roasted almonds
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon beet powder (optional)
- Pinch of sea salt
- Unsweetened almond milk, to taste

Preparation

1. In a cereal bowl, combine the oats, dates, almonds, chia seeds, chocolate chips, cocoa powder, beet powder (if using), and salt. Add 1 cup of boiling water, stir, and cover.
2. Allow the oats to steep for 3 minutes. Stir in milk to desired consistency. Top with fresh fruit like sliced banana or berries.

Carrot Cake Overnight Oats

By Mayo Clinic

Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients

- ½ cup rolled oats
- ⅔ cup skim milk
- ⅓ cup plain, nonfat Greek yogurt
- ¼ cup finely grated carrot
- 1½ teaspoon chia seeds
- 2 teaspoons maple syrup
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon pecans, chopped
- 1 tablespoon shredded coconut, unsweetened

Preparation

1. Mix all ingredients, except pecans and coconut, in a bowl or Mason jar. Top with pecans and coconuts, and cover with a lid. Refrigerate overnight and eat chilled.

Seeded Chocolate Chip Cookies

By Martha Rose Shulman

Yield: About 4 dozen cookies

Ingredients

- ½ cup whole-wheat flour
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 4 ounces (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ¼ cup organic granulated sugar (regular will work also)
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¼ cup plus 2 teaspoons sunflower seeds
- 2 heaped tablespoons pumpkin seeds
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- ½ cup (scant) rolled oats
- 8 ounces bittersweet chocolate (or more if desired), cut in 1-inch pieces

Preparation

1. Sift together the flours and baking soda and set aside. In the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream butter until lemony yellow, about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and paddle. Add organic sugar, brown sugar and salt. Continue creaming mixture on medium speed until it is lump free, about 1 minute. Stop the mixer and scrape down sides of the bowl and the paddle.
2. Add egg and vanilla and beat on low speed for 15 seconds, or until they are fully incorporated. Do not overbeat. Scrape down the sides of the bowl and paddle.
3. On low speed, add sifted flour mixture. Beat slowly until all of the flour is incorporated. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add seeds, oats and chocolate chunks and mix in.
4. Heat oven to 350 degrees with racks adjusted to the lower third and middle of the oven. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Spoon dough by heaped teaspoons (or use a 1-inch scoop) 2 inches apart onto prepared baking sheets.

5. Bake for 14 to 15 minutes, until lightly browned, rotating baking sheets from top to bottom and from front to back halfway through the baking. Remove from the oven and slide parchment off the baking sheet and onto a work surface. Allow cookies to cool for at least 10 minutes before serving, or for at least 20 minutes before storing in an airtight container. Cookies will keep for three days at room temperature.

Chicken Meatball Fajita Skillet

By Serena Wolf

Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

For the meatballs:

- 1 pound ground chicken
- 1 ¾ cups grated zucchini, roughly 7- to 8-inch zucchini grated on the large holes of a box grater
- 2 garlic cloves grated or finely minced
- 1 chipotle pepper canned in adobo
- 2 teaspoons adobo sauce from the chipotle can
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons chia seeds

For the skillet:

- 1 ½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper thinly sliced
- 1 yellow bell pepper thinly sliced
- 1 green bell pepper thinly sliced
- 1 red onion thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch of cayenne pepper, optional
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 28-ounce can diced fire roasted tomatoes, drained
- 1 ¼ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
- Finely chopped cilantro for serving, optional

Preparation

1. Place all the ingredients for the meatballs in a mixing bowl. Mix until everything is well combined. Cover with plastic and refrigerate for 20 minutes.
2. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil. Spray a wire rack with cooking spray and place it on the prepared baking sheet. If you do not have a wire rack, the meatballs can be baked directly on the foil lined baking sheet.
3. With damp hands, form the meatball mixture into balls roughly 2-inches in diameter. You should have about 18 meatballs.
4. Bake the meatballs for 22 minutes until cooked through.
5. Heat the olive oil in a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, add the bell peppers and onion and cook for 10-12 minutes until the vegetables are softened and lightly browned in spots.
6. Add the garlic, chili powder, smoked paprika, cumin, cayenne (if using), and a generous pinch of kosher salt. Cook for 1 minute until the spices are toasted and fragrant. Stir in the beans and fire roasted tomatoes. Taste and season with a little extra salt or cayenne if necessary.
7. Turn off the heat and nestle the meatballs in the vegetable mixture.
8. Top with cheddar cheese in an even layer. Preheat the broiler to high.
9. Place the skillet under the broiler and broil until the cheese is melted and bubbling, about 2 minutes.
10. Top with chopped cilantro and/or hot sauce.