



## chia seeds

### What is Chia?

Chia is an herbaceous plant, native to southern Mexico. <sup>1</sup> It's been part of the human diet for thousands of years and was an important crop amongst pre-Columbian Mesoamerican societies, where the seeds were used for food, medicine and oil. <sup>2</sup>



Chia's scientific name is *Salvia hispanica* L.; the name 'Salvia' stems from the Latin word *Salvare*, meaning 'the healer'. <sup>3</sup> Thought to play a prominent role in religious ceremonies, chia's value almost led to its destruction as Spanish settlers sought to eliminate all elements of indigenous culture. <sup>4 5</sup> Fortunately, a few of the hardy crops survived and in the 1990s the chia revival began. <sup>5</sup>

Nowadays chia seeds are popular with runners, many of whom are inspired by the Tarahumara tribe, the famously strong runners who feature in Christopher McDougall's book *Born to Run*. Members of the Tarahumara consume chia in a drink called *iskiate* to help fuel their long-distance runs. <sup>6</sup>

### Processing

Naturya Chia Seeds are grown across 30 farms in South America, with production platforms in Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina. This diversity ensures the product is available regardless of any localised climatic issues. The production process is standardised to provide a consistently high quality product. The farms are carefully inspected and support is provided for the farmers, with training, harvesting and sales assistance. <sup>5</sup>



The chia plants are harvested between November and January. Chia seeds are easily removed from the plant so after harvesting the crop is already 96% pure seed. The seeds are then passed through a vibration cleaning mechanism and over magnets to ensure their purity. <sup>5</sup>

If the seeds are damp after harvesting they are dried out on a cloth hung about a metre above the ground, under which warm air is passed. Naturya Chia Seeds are regularly tested for contaminants to ensure that the final product is completely pure. <sup>5</sup>

### The Science

Chia seeds have a high concentration of omega-3. In particular, chia seeds are a great source of alpha-linolenic acid, which is a form of essential fatty acid. <sup>7</sup> Omega-3 fatty acids help to protect the body against heart disease and improve the blood's cholesterol balance. <sup>8</sup>

Scientists recommend we consume omega-6 and omega-3 in a ratio of around 3:1 but it is thought that many of us consume too much omega-6 and not enough omega-3,<sup>9</sup> making it important to seek out sources of the latter. In comparison with some other sources of omega-3, chia seeds do not contain the contaminants that may be found in fish (such as mercury and dioxin) or the anti-nutritional compounds that exist in flaxseed!<sup>10</sup>



Chia seeds are high in fibre, antioxidants, calcium and protein.<sup>3</sup> Fibre is an important part of our diet, which can help reduce cholesterol and assist digestion.<sup>11</sup> Chia seeds are higher in protein content and amino acid content than most traditionally used grains, including wheat, corn, rice, oats and barley.<sup>1</sup> A full chain of amino acids is required to help build and repair the body's cells!<sup>2</sup>

Chia seeds are also a good source of several vitamins and minerals, containing vitamin A, B3, iron and magnesium.

## How to enjoy Chia

Although we have been told by a number of customers that they enjoy chia in a trail mix, in gel form or as an added ingredient, the EU currently demands that any company selling chia seeds only market them as an additive for bread products with a maximum chia seed content of 5%. Whilst we may see the EU's stance as somewhat limiting, chia seeds certainly do make a fine addition to freshly baked loaves, tortillas or doughballs. Their dough-boosting benefits are endless!

As ever, feel free to experiment. If you come up with a great recipe then why not send it to us along with some pictures? The best recipes stand a chance of winning some free Naturya products and being uploaded to our site for everyone to try!

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