

Featuring Salba Smart on *Courierpress.com*

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Say hello to Salba®

This wouldn't be the first time a grain has sparked heated discussion among nutrition professionals, or the last time a grain will generate a buzz with consumers in the nutrition marketplace. This time, we will be focusing on chia - the latest natural health product to enter the category of so-called "super foods."

But wait a minute, chia seeds are hardly anything new. In fact, the word chia is easily recognizable and quickly associated with the foliage of Chia Pets - the 1980s craze with the ubiquitous jingle. *Ch-Ch-Ch-Chia*, anyone?

Rediscovering chia

Long before it was marketed as a novelty, chia seeds were a staple of the ancient Aztec diet and often sustained many a runner who would travel between villages relaying important messages and information. So why all the recent focus on these healthy, edible seeds, and why now?

Chia seeds come from a plant called *Salvia hispanica*, which is indigenous to southern Mexico. They are often compared with flaxseed due to similarities in their nutrient profile. While the amounts of some nutrients are higher in flaxseed, chia seeds do seem to have the upper hand as a source of omega-3 fatty acids. And, unlike flaxseed, chia seeds can be stored for a long period of time before going rancid and do not require grinding in order to be digested.

Recent findings have shown that the nutrient profiles of different varieties of chia may be inconsistent, but overall, chia provides fiber (e.g., about 2 tbsp gives you 1/4 oz of fiber) as well as other important nutrients, including vegetable protein, magnesium, calcium, iron, and antioxidants. It is important to note that, at present, only the white variety of chia (i.e., Salba®) has shown consistent nutritional value upon scientific inspection.

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Salba® benefits

Salba® is grown under controlled conditions in Peru by Canadian-based Salba Nutritional Solutions. This new generation of the *Salvia hispanica* provides consistent nutritional value: 3.5 oz of Salba® contains as much omega-3 fatty acid as a 32-ounce Atlantic salmon steak, as much magnesium as 10 stalks of broccoli, as much calcium as 2½ cups of milk, and as much iron as ½ cup of kidney beans.

Salba® is also high in insoluble fiber, prompting dietitians to recommend it as an appetite suppressant. It is highly attracted to water and can hold an amount of water equivalent to 12 times its own weight. Salba® forms a gel in the stomach that can prevent digestive enzymes from coming into contact with the carbohydrates we may obtain from our diet, which may help keep blood sugar levels in balance.

Further findings from the University of Toronto's Dr. Vladimir Vuskan, a respected pioneer of the functional foods movement, have shown that Salba® supplementation in type 2 diabetics may improve cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure and inflammation.

In the 6-month study, patients already on controlled diets or taking regular medication were found to have significantly lowered systolic and diastolic blood pressures and a reduced level of c-reactive protein (a major risk factor for heart disease) after taking Salba® every day. While further research is needed, these ground breaking findings have prompted Dr. Vuskan to declare Salba® "a functional food that has a health effect in diabetic individuals."

Salba® has a nut-like flavor and can be a great addition to your diet. You can eat it whole by the handful, mix some of the ground seeds into flour when making baked goods, or sprinkle the seeds either grounded or whole on your morning cereal, yogurt snack, or a wide variety of salads and soups. In addition, there is a select amount of Salba® products on the market, and as well as a variety of recipes scattered across the internet.

With whole grains being considered an essential part of a healthy diet, enjoying servings of Salba® is an easy way to ensure you meet your daily nutritional requirements.

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