

The Chia Seed – Super food for endurance athletes

I don't believe in miracles for weight loss or 1 super duper food or diet that magically makes us lean and mean. However, I DO believe in the power of super foods and want to highlight one such food for you – Chia Seeds. As we approach summer and training and racing in the heat, the call of adding chia seeds to our diet grows louder!!

I started using chia seeds last summer as I trained to ride 112 miles as part of an Ironman relay team with my friends, Bruce and Paul.

My primary reason for using them was to increase my ability to stay hydrated during training and reduce my dependency on water and nutrition as I raced. I had very, very good luck with it.

I've been reading more on Chia and I'm finding very, very good reasons to make it a part of my every day diet to improve nutrition, aid fat loss, improve performance and enhance recovery.

Chia seeds are low in sodium, high in fiber, high in omega 3 fatty acids (these are the kind found in Salmon) and loaded with anti-oxidants. They are an excellent mix of high quality fat, slow absorbing carbohydrate and quality plant protein – making it an IDEAL sport and nutritional supplement!! Chia seeds are anti-inflammatory and that's so important to recovery since reducing inflammation speeds recovery.

They are nearly flavorless.

Today I tossed 1 tablespoon into my organic cottage cheese along w/ yellow grape tomatoes, a little chopped green onion and a peppadew pepper diced (you can find these little red, round kind of spicy, pickled peppers at the olive bar at Dillons. They are yummy.) This was delicious as well as very colorful and pretty. But, I digress...back to the Chia seed.

Nutritional profile of Chia Seeds

1 ounce = 2 Tablespoons

Calories = 137

Fat = 9 grams

Carbohydrate- 12 grams

Fiber= 11 grams

Sugar= 0 (zero!)

Protein= 4 grams

Add 2 Tablespoon (about 1 ounce) to just about anything – in oatmeal, on top of a salad, in a smoothie.

Or you can make a gel to add to things or take as a training nutritional aid. This gel will keep in the fridge for a couple of weeks. It takes some time for the chia seeds to absorb the water. So combine them in the proportions listed below and put in a container in the fridge, wait a few hours or overnight and you'll have your flavorless gel. Additionally, you could also do this with a juice as a gel for training purposes. I've heard a few people recommend w/ orange juice, but probably any juice would work. Chia seeds can absorb 12 times their weight in water. This lends new meaning to the term bloated doesn't it?

Chia gel recipe:

7-8 parts water + 1 part chia seed.

Juice chia gel w/ electrolytes:

7-8 parts juice (or ½ juice, ½ water) + 1 part chia seed + electrolytes such as salt tabs or endurolytes. Add the amount of electrolytes that you need for the training you are going to do based on duration, intensity and heat/humidity. If your electrolytes are in a capsule – empty the contents of the capsule into your gel – I think this is obvious but wanted to clarify! Put into a gel flask and sip as you train.

Some say the seeds need to be soaked, others promote just putting it into food. Either way, you can't go wrong!

Another suggestion I've read about and haven't yet tried is to mix an equal part chia seed gel w/ an equal part of your favorite organic jam or jelly (please no high fructose corn syrup) and spread on toast. Sounds worth a try as a pre-training meal doesn't it?

I do believe that as triathletes, Chia seeds have a place in our diet as a super food that is a great source of healthy fats, low glycemic, zero sugar carbohydrates and tons of anti-oxidants that can increase health, improve performance and enhance recovery.

I have purchased the Navitas brand of chia seeds through Amazon. Chia seeds are readily available and can be found at local health food stores.

Who knew that the seeds that grew your little chia pet years ago would today be the fuel that enhances your performance and speeds your recovery!

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Coach K

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