

NEED FOR SEEDS



THE RUNDOWN

They say that “good things come in small packages...” and they were right when it comes to seeds! Despite their diminutive size, seeds are nutritional powerhouses packed with vitamins, minerals, protein, fiber, and healthy fats. They’re easy to find and spectacular for you; what’s not to love about these mini marvels?

Q & A

CAN I COOK WITH SEEDS?

Surprisingly enough... yes, you can! Chia, flax, hemp, and other seeds can be mixed directly into your batter to add textural interest and nutty deliciousness. Alternatively, you can grind the seeds into flours as you would a grain and substitute them for other wheat or wheat-less flours. Ground flax, when mixed with water, has recently come into popularity as an egg replacer.

NUTRITION NOTES

Many seeds, especially the ones we’re talking about here, are plant-based sources of omega-3 fatty acids.

Omega-3s are essential to our health, but our bodies don’t create them on their own. These fats are actually good for your heart; they lower levels of triglycerides and help prevent stroke and heart attacks. There’s also evidence out there that shows Omega-3s can play a beneficial role in fighting certain cancers, rheumatoid arthritis, and inflammatory bowel diseases.

As far as essential fatty acids (EFAs) are concerned, there are generally two types: short chain and long chain. Short chain EFAs can’t be created by our bodies; we must turn to seeds (which are chock-full of short chain EFAs) and other sources to get enough. Our body will use some of these short EFAs as is and convert some into long chain EFAs; the process of conversion, however, is long and inefficient. Because of that, we also recommend supplementing your diet with long chain EFAs; they’re found most readily in fatty fish and seaweed.

Seeds are also a wonderful source of fiber. Dietary fiber is the part of plant-based food that your body can’t break down; it, therefore, adds “bulk” and helps carry waste through your system. It speeds up the elimination of toxic substances and can help keep your colon in tip-top shape. Soluble fiber, of which seeds are particularly full, dissolves and forms a gelatinous substance in your gut that really helps move everything along. All this fiber means you’ll feel fuller for longer, your blood sugar will more readily regulate itself, and your LDL cholesterol will be less likely to climb.

INTEGRATION STATION

CHIA SEEDS have stood the test of time; they’ve been popular since the Aztecs ruled. These nutritional must-haves are extremely high in omega-3s, soluble fiber, and calcium; they’re popularly known as “runner’s food.” Amazingly enough, chia holds 10 times its weight in water and can slowly release that water back into your body over periods of long exercise. They’re



also slow to digest, so they help your body regulate its blood sugar.

FLAX SEEDS have a nutty flavor and more omega-3s than you can shake a stick at. These should be ground to maximize your body's ability to process all the omega-3s and soluble fiber within; they can be purchased pre-ground or ground at home.

HEMP SEEDS are ridiculously nutritious. They're a complete protein, a rare find in the plant world, so you'll be getting all nine essential amino acids. They're also resplendently full of omega-3s and -6s, fatty acids your body needs to keep itself going.

RECIPE

CHEWY TRAIL MIX ENERGY BARS

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup raisins or other dried fruit
- 1/3 cup sesame seeds
- 1/2 cup pecans or pumpkin seeds, chopped
- 1/2 cup almonds, chopped
- 1 cup brown rice syrup
- 1/2 cup honey or brown rice syrup
- 1 cup almond butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Combine first 6 ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. In a small pot, heat the brown rice syrup, honey (if using), almond butter and vanilla extract until melted, thoroughly combined and bubbly. Pour over dry ingredients in bowl. Use a wooden spoon or stiff spatula to completely coat all ingredients. Mixture will be very sticky. Lightly oil a 9 · x 13 baking sheet or casserole dish; alternately use a parchment paper lined pan. Press mixture evenly into pan. Wet hands to prevent mixture from sticking to hands. Let cool and firm up for at least an hour before cutting into bars. Can be stored in an airtight container or wrapped in food wrap for up to a week.

