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# Not a Bad Seed Here

Nothing against nuts, but they're not the only crunch- and flavor-adding game in the kitchen. Seeds are pint-size powerhouses that boast mega nutrients, good fats, and a hefty dose of fiber. Sprinkle with abandon.

By Rachel Meltzer Warren, R.D.N.



## Pumpkin

No worries if you OD'd on pumpkin sweets and beer this fall: These seeds, which have a slightly grassy zing, do a body good. Loaded with the mineral manganese—which promotes bone health—as well as muscle-building protein, they also contain compounds that may help control blood sugar, according to a recent U.K. study.

**TRY IT** Mix into bread crumbs to coat chicken or tofu slices; pan-fry for extra crispiness.

BLACK AND WHITE CHIA ARE SMALL, BUT MIGHTY GOOD.



## Chia

Made famous by the Chia Pet (which, yes, you can still buy!), these seeds have sprouted to MVP nutritional status. They're a great source of filling fiber, the bone-strengthening minerals phosphorus and calcium, and alpha-linolenic acids, which your body converts to heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. They swell up in water, taking on a tapioca-like consistency. But the mellow-tasting seeds are most loved dry for the way they pop when you bite down on them.

**TRY IT** Make a jam by simmering a 10-ounce bag of frozen berries and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chia for 10 minutes.

## A LONG LIFE

The good-for-you fats in seeds can turn rancid in response to heat and deteriorate over time. To keep them fresh, store in an airtight container in the freezer. And take a whiff before using: If anything smells musty or just off—even if they haven't reached the "best before" date—toss 'em.



## Flax

Nutty flaxseeds—which are most nutritious when ground in a blender or food processor—may help curb high blood pressure, according to a recent study in the journal *Hypertension*. Better still, they're one of the best sources of lignans, antioxidants that may lower your chances of getting certain types of cancer.

**TRY IT** Next time you're baking a quick bread or cake, substitute one tablespoon of ground flaxseed and three tablespoons of water for each egg in the recipe; blend, then let sit for five minutes.



## Hemp

As a fashion statement, hemp is iffy. As a health aid, though, it's a guaranteed hit. These mild-flavored, soft-to-the-bite babies offer as much protein in two tablespoons as six ounces of milk. Look for hemp hearts, or shelled hemp seeds, which don't contain the tooth-breaking outer shell, making the seed more versatile and yummy.

**TRY IT** Blend with fresh basil, olive oil, and Parmesan cheese in place of pine nuts for a powered-up pesto.



## Poppy

Two tablespoons of the fairly fruity seeds give you a quarter of your daily calcium requirement and a decent hit of immune-enhancing zinc to boot. (Speaking of hits, before you take one, know that poppies may be coated with opium residue from the harvesting process, so you'll probably want to steer clear if you have a work drug test coming up.) Check your teeth after eating—these little guys get easily stuck.

**TRY IT** Shake one teaspoon into your favorite chicken or tuna salad recipe for extra oomph. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROMULO YANES