

Chia Fresca: The Perfect Snack



The Problem



The Solution

The purpose of this month's article is to motivate readers to switch to a diet that is low in carbs, high in fiber and rich in nutrients. The goal is to reduce calories from processed foods and substitute with calories from whole foods. The benefits of making this transition are well documented: better health (reduced risk for cardiac disease and diabetes), enhanced weight loss and improved energy levels.

The challenge is to find whole food alternatives that are tasty and convenient. Chia seeds are a prime example of a whole food that meets both objectives. Although it is a good idea to sprinkle chia seeds on a salad, it would be difficult to add enough chia seeds to have a major impact on your diet.



Chia Fresca

A more convenient and flavorsome approach to increasing your calories from whole foods is to start drinking Chia Fresca (Fresca is Spanish for fresh and in this context, it refers to fresh water or a water based drink with added seeds and fruit). Rather than a sprinkle of chia on your salad, it is easy to drink 3-6 tablespoons of chia per day. This amount of chia seeds provides 200-400 calories a day and makes it easy to eliminate at least 200-400 calories of processed foods.

Remember, all calories are not alike. When you eat 364 calories from processed foods (bread, pasta, potatoes) it is equivalent to drinking a “Big Gulp” (364 calories). Carbs are rapidly converted to sugar in the intestine. The sugar is absorbed so quickly that it overpowers the body’s ability to “burn it off” and the excess sugar is converted to fat (think cellulite).

As a result, hunger returns more quickly than it would if you were to drink an equal number of calories from a Chia Fresca. Chia seeds are low in carbohydrates and are high in fiber. The fiber slows the absorption of carbs. As a result, if you were to drink 364 calories of Chia Fresca, hunger would be delayed as compared to drinking a similar number of calories in a sugary drink. A great start to losing those extra pounds.

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Chia Fresca is a drink that is easy to make and has great taste. The following is an outline of how to make Chia Fresca and how to make it a part of your everyday diet:

Typical ingredients:

- Start with a container that will hold at least 6 cups (1.5 quarts)
- Add 4 tablespoons chia seeds to empty container
- Add 3 cups water and **stir vigorously** for several minutes (inadequate initial stirring leads to clumping of seeds)
- Add 1-3 fresh squeezed lemons or limes (include as much pulp as possible)
- Add pureed berries, banana, or fruit of choice. (2-4 tbs.)
- Dilute to taste (add more water or diet drinks such as: Ocean Spray, see photos)
- Once you get comfortable with your favorite way to make Chia Fresca, try making it in larger quantities. Store it in the refrigerator and take it to work.



Concentrated Chia Fresca



Dilute Chia Fresca



Close up Chia Fresca

Caveats:

- Chia seeds can be messy, a large spill (see picture) is best cleaned up with a vacuum cleaner or dust buster.
- For small spills or to clean an empty container, use moist paper towel. Avoid using washcloth because the seeds stick to everything!
- Start slowly: Some people experience bloating and gas when adding a large amount of chia seeds to their diet.
- Don't worry if you cannot get enough calories from Chia Fresca. Next month's Ask the Doctor will review the one and only food group that has been proven to help you live longer and healthier. Together with Chia Fresca, they add a solid foundation to a healthy diet.

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Vacuum up Chia Spills



Take Chia Fresca to Work

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