

## Chia and quinoa latest to earn title of super food

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These seeds might be considered “ancient,” but with the Internet, finding ways to prepare them has moved them into the category of super food.

Chia seeds and quinoa, also a seed, are on that list of “new” super foods, much like hemp seed and flaxseed.

“Ancient seeds have and continue to be a health trend,” says **Christine Palumbo**, Naperville dietitian and nutrition expert. “These seeds are high in protein and rich in fiber, and they are gluten free.”

While chia is loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, quinoa has more amino acid strains than most other food sources.

**Palumbo**, who has been featured on Oprah, CNN and Fox News, and also writes for Chicago Parent magazine, says they are suitable for vegan diets, too.

“Go out and experiment,” she says. “Find recipes and try them out.”

Most of these seeds are readily available in local and national grocery food chains, she adds.

### Testimonials

Naperville mom Neva Grey, a yoga instructor for children, half-marathon runner and a long-time vegetarian, has been using chia and quinoa for years.

“Quinoa is my grain staple, and I use it instead of rice, pasta and so on,” Grey says. “Chia I add to our salads, breakfast smoothies and anywhere else. They add a little bit of crunch, and my kids can’t even tell.”

Grey stumbled on quinoa and chia when searching for alternative sources of protein when nursing her first son.

“As a vegetarian, I am always looking for sources of healthy nutrition,” Grey says. “I don’t want to waste my calories on junk.”

She often scours fitness magazines and the web for recipe ideas that have helped her keep it interesting, nutritious and fun.

The Internet is filled with fun recipes, from breakfast foods to main courses, salads, baked goods and desserts. A couple of interesting ones are vanilla chia seed pudding or quinoa burger.

Melissa Walther, another Naperville mom and avid runner, frequently uses quinoa for a variety of dishes.

"It has a crunchiness to it, and it's higher in protein. ... It gives the kids exposure to something a little different — flavor and texture wise," she says.

### **Now's the time**

**Palumbo** often sees a heightened interest in grains and seeds when there is a dietary adjustment or a weight loss goal.

"Now is the time people start thinking about their diets," she says. "The holiday season is over, and once we make it through the Super Bowl weekend, there are no more excuses."

She says integrating all kinds of grains and seeds into recipes is surprisingly easy.

"Chia doesn't go rancid as flax does. I grind my flax seeds for better nutritional absorption and keep little freezer packets for better shelf life," **Palumbo** advises. "I pre-cook quinoa in a slow-cooker and use as a base for many recipes."

These seeds often have beneficial effects on health issues such as chronic diseases, blood sugar levels and "even inflammation," Palumbo adds.

Inflammation is often neglected but fairly common even without symptoms, especially in overweight people.

Each individual has different needs, lifestyles and health issues to address. But looking at the daily food intake is a good way to start leading a healthier lifestyle, **Palumbo** says.

"Only one person cares about your health as much as you do," she says. "It's all about balance, variety and moderation."