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For more information, contact
Kaye Effertz (701)663-9799



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Omega-3's, lignans and fiber . . .

Put the healthy magic of flaxseed in your diet

April 13, 2007, Chicago, IL—"Inside this seed is a magic oil and inside this oil is a magic substance."

That's how chef Alton Brown introduced viewers to the essential Omega-3 fatty acid inside flaxseed on a recent episode of his hit Food Network show *Good Eats*.

This magic Omega-3 inside flaxseed is called alpha linolenic acid (ALA) and it's "essential" because it's something our bodies need that we can't make. But never has it been easier or more fun to get the goodness inside flaxseed into everyday diets. Brown did so by using flaxseed oil in a protein bar. The whole seed—when ground or roasted—offers even more health and versatility.

You see besides its heart-healthy Omega-3 oil content, flaxseed is packed with protein and fiber and loaded with cancer-fighting lignans. Plus its pleasant, nutty flavor means there's never been a tastier way to boost nutrition in all sorts of favorites from smoothies and soups to cinnamon scones and pizza. (See sidebar for fun ideas on how to include flaxseed in food for everyday or gourmet).

Health-conscious Americans are now recognizing that indiscriminate fat reduction deprives our bodies of essential fatty acids, especially Omega-3 fatty acids. Labeled "heart-healthy," polyunsaturated Omega-3 fatty acids can reduce LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, which are proven risk factors in coronary heart disease. What's more, research suggests that ALA, the Omega-3 fatty acid in flaxseed plays a crucial anti-inflammatory role. It's why the American Heart Association's Dietary Guidelines now recommend including high ALA sources, such as flaxseed, in healthy diets for the general population. Results from heart disease prevention studies suggest daily intakes of between 1.5 g and 3.0 g of

ALA are very beneficial.

Because it's such a concentrated source of ALA, flaxseed makes it easy to get more of this good stuff in our diet by tossing it into baked goods or culinary creations. Just a tablespoon contains almost two grams (1.8) of Omega-3 ALA before grinding. In fact, pound for pound, flaxseed contains more Omega-3 fatty acids than any other natural source—about three times as much as an equivalent weight of salmon.

Good fats, fiber and flavor. What's more, just an ounce provides over 30% of USDA's recommended daily fiber intake. Indeed, flaxseed is almost a third (28%) fiber. That's a big deal because, according to the American Dietetic Association, fiber intake has a major impact on obesity, heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. The high quality fiber in flax is well known for its ability to control irregularity and promote good colonic health—reducing the risk of colon cancer. And flaxseed's *pièce de résistance* is that it delivers satisfying fullness deliciously, resulting in better appetite control and weight loss.

More healthy magic. Researchers continue to discover the medicinal properties of plant lignans. Flaxseed is packed with these natural phytonutrients—the fiber or hull portion of the seed contains 75 to 800 times more of them than any other plant source. Lignans minimize many of the negative effects of estrogenic compounds in humans, reducing the risk of hormone-dependant cancers of the colon, breast and prostate. Indeed, recent research published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute found that a high dietary intake of plant lignans could reduce the risk of breast cancer by almost 17%—good news for the more than one million women worldwide diagnosed with the disease every year.

Lignans are also powerful antioxidants protecting the heart by reducing plaque and lowering blood glucose levels. In fact, SDG, the major lignan in flaxseed, is associated with reducing both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. And, if it's hot flash help you want, research has also found flaxseed lignans can help control menopausal symptoms.

Beyond the Omega-3's, fiber and lignans, flaxseed possesses an amazing nutritional profile. High in protein (18%-21%), flaxseed protein includes many amino acids the body can't produce. And who would guess the tiny seed has about seven times the potassium as a banana (dry weight basis)? Even the vitamin E in flaxseed is the right kind—primarily gamma-tocopherol—which, no surprise, functions as a biological antioxidant.

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