

Janice Feuer-Haugen, chef, food blogger, culinary coach and teacher. Author of five cookbooks including *Fruit-Sweet & Sugar-Free* and *Chocolate Decadence*. She shares her recipes and tips for living everyday healthy, everyday delicious in cooking classes and in her blog: EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com.



Triple-Berry Chia Pudding

NATURALLY DELICIOUS RECIPES • Janice Feuer-Haugen

Smooth, Luscious, Nutritious

NO COOKING REQUIRED

Perhaps, like me, you've read the rave reviews about chia seeds and chia puddings. Perhaps, like me, you've even made them a few times. And, perhaps like me, they never worked for you. That is until I read this amusing and well-written article by Joe Yonan in the *Washington Post*. He suggested high-speed blending the ingredients. What a difference! And now that I know that it's possible to substitute frozen berries for fresh, this *Triple-Berry Chia Pudding* has become even more flavorful and more deeply colored.

The Secret

Actually there are two secrets for a smooth, luscious, delicious and nutritious *Triple-Berry Chia Pudding*:

1. A whirl in a high-speed blender
2. Just-picked berries or a high-quality mix of frozen berries

Frozen Berries Often Better Than Fresh

Ever wonder why frozen berries often are more deeply colored and flavorful than their fresh cousins? I did. So, I put that question to a gentleman I met a number of years ago who knew a lot about the ways of harvesting produce. (When I met him he was president of a prestigious Napa Valley winery.) His unexpected response has stayed with me all these many years. I'm assuming (but please correct me if this is no longer the case) his response is still true today.

- The top frozen fruit brands have standing contracts with growers for their Grade A fruit. Picked at the peak of ripeness this premium fruit is then immediately trucked from the farm to the packing facility. There it's flash frozen within 24 hours of harvesting, yielding a consistently superior product.



- Grade C fruit, the fruit with lesser color and flavor is oftentimes what makes its way to local supermarkets. Affecting the quality of the fruit, this fruit is often picked early to keep it from spoiling during the longer packing, shipping and storage times.

The exception, of course, are the berries you grow yourself, or that you can get from local farmers' markets, that are picked at their peak of ripeness and eaten off the bush or within a day or two.

Nutritional Equals

New York Times physician and bestselling author Michael Greger, MD FACLM, cites two studies comparing fresh berries to frozen berries. Both studies found "no statistically significant differences between the... [antioxidant levels] for fresh and frozen strawberries." Both studies "concluded, therefore, that freshly picked, fresh commercial, and frozen raspberries all contain similar levels of phytochemicals and antioxidants per serving."

Chia Seeds Offer High-Level Nutrition

The word "chia" translates to the Mayan word for "strength." Native to Mexico and northern Guatemala, chia seeds were one of the main staples in Mayan and Aztec diets as early as 3,500 B.C. They were used not only in these ancient cultures as medicines and food, but consumed by their warriors to produce strength

and stamina. A quick web search reveals a wealth of information on good-for-you chia seeds:

- High in protein, omega-3 fats, dietary fiber, minerals, vitamins, antioxidants, phytochemicals and flavonoids
- Naturally gluten-free
- Easily incorporated into cereals, breads, cookies, yogurt, salads, salad dressings, protein shakes and desserts.

- Excellent source of dietary fiber
- Enhance digestion and cardiovascular health and lower type 2 diabetes risks
- Long-term chia-seed supplementation shown to decrease cardiovascular risk

Additionally, even when ground, chia seeds have an amazing gelling ability. Their ability to take on liquid helps thicken *Triple-Berry Chia Pudding* with no cooking required. ■

TRIPLE-BERRY CHIA PUDDING

For the smoothest, most luscious texture, use a high-speed blender. When fresh berries aren't in season, use high-quality frozen berries.

Gluten- and dairy-free.

Prepare a minimum of 2–4 hours before serving, as the chia seeds require time to chill and to thicken the pudding.

Makes: 2 ¼ cups, 4 servings

Active time: 10 minutes

Total time: 10 minutes, plus 2–4 hours to chill and thicken the pudding

INGREDIENTS

2 ½ cups (10 ounces) of fresh berries or a mixture of partially defrosted frozen blueberries, raspberries & blackberries



⅓ cup canned full-fat coconut milk, stirred before measuring

3 tablespoons chia seeds

4 teaspoons light, local honey, or your favorite sweetener

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

½ teaspoon vanilla

GARNISH

Defrosted frozen berries and a sprig of fresh mint

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place everything in a high-speed blender and blend for about 2 ½ minutes. (More time will be needed with a regular blender.) Scrape down the sides of the blender jar after 1 minute to incorporate any wayward chia seeds.

2. Transfer the pudding into small,

individual ramekins or other containers. Cover with plastic wrap.

3. Refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours, and up to 3 days, before serving.

4. Just before serving, garnish each serving with a few defrosted or fresh berries and a sprig of mint.

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Janice@EverydayHealthyEverydayDelicious.com