

# get inspired



## The Humble Seed that Started a Phenomenon Mamma Chia reinigorates an old favorite

BY CARA LUCAS

Instead of growing chia pets, Janie Hoffman makes chia drinks. Hoffman—CEO and founder of Mamma Chia—burst onto the beverage industry scene in 2011 by launching the first organic chia seed beverage in the marketplace. It turns out that “ch-ch-ch-chia!” is good for more than just growing those grassy animal-shaped figurines.

The chia seed boasts potent nutritional benefits. Both the Mayans and Aztecs held the ancient grain in high esteem for increasing energy and stamina—one tablespoon of chia was considered enough to sustain a warrior for 24 hours. No wonder it is called a superfood. Chia seeds are packed with more antioxidants than blueberries, and serve up a super dose of omega-3s.

Hoffman knew this when she started experimenting with chia seeds in her own recipes. “I became so enchanted with these little seeds that I literally was adding them to everything in my kitchen, but it was my fun and tasty chia beverages that were the biggest hit with my friends and family,” said Hoffman.

So Hoffman rolled up her sleeves, got to work, and started what is now known as Mamma Chia—the first sustainable chia-based company. The tasty beverage features more than a day’s worth of omega-3s (2,500 mg), 25 percent of daily fiber, four grams of complete protein, and 95 mg of calcium. The chia seeds are incorporated into

lightly sweetened fruit juices, and exposure to the liquid gives the seeds a slick coating. Creative flavors include Blackberry Hibiscus, Cherry Lime, Cranberry Lemonade, Raspberry Passion, Pomegranate Mint, Coconut Mango, Kiwi Lime, Guava Mamma, and Grapefruit Ginger.

Today Mamma Chia beverages are in Whole Foods stores across the nation, as well as hundreds of bodegas and natural food stores. They will soon be in Albertsons too.

Hoffman, who was recently named BevNET’s “Person of the Year,” has already made a huge impact on the beverage industry by creating an entirely new category with her chia drink. It is the seventh-ranked brand nationally, alongside powerhouse brands like Coca Cola and PepsiCo. She credits the company’s sincere product for their ability to be competitive.

“In addition to using the highest quality organic ingredients, we put a lot of love into every delicious bottle of Mamma Chia. That isn’t something that the large companies are known for,” says Hoffman.

Hoffman taught meditation before launching Mamma Chia. While she is certainly focused on rebranding the chia seed as one of today’s top nutritional ingredients, she is also expanding their social mission.

Mamma Chia’s priorities are evidenced by their commitment to sustainable initiatives and small farmers. The company donates one percent of its gross sales to support farmers, community groups, and organizations building healthy local food systems. They are also a Certified B Corporation, a member of 1 percent for the Planet, and a founding member of the Slow Money Alliance (learn more at [slowmoney.org](http://slowmoney.org)).

“This is a team sport, and Mamma Chia has one of the most amazing teams in the industry,” says Hoffman. “I am inspired daily by their dedication and passion for building such a beautiful brand and company.” 