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BODY FOR LIFE, EATING FOR LIFE, AND TRANSFORMATION

bread-free  
**bread**

Amazingly Healthy Gluten-Free,  
Grain-Free Breads, Muffins, Cookies & More

Nerissa Oden

# Bread-Free

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# Bread

Gluten-Free, Grain-Free, Amazingly Healthy Veggie- and Seed-Based Recipes

NERISSA ODEN



To my husband, Joe Vitale,  
~~who encouraged me to share my creativity with others in a HUGE way.~~

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You ate every version of bread I made with eager enjoyment.  
Your dislike of plain vegetables coupled with avoidance of your food sensitivities  
and high carbohydrate foods, challenged me in new ways and helped  
to shape what is now called *Bread-Free Bread*.

I am grateful for you. Your love, encouragement and support seed miracles!  
I love you.

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# Beyond Bread

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My vision for a bread-free bread world



Imagine a near future world where your bread has been freed from the bonds of tradition. In this world most breads are made almost entirely from leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. Bread-free bread options would exist in every restaurant, fast-food chain, and grocery store.

People would stop buying traditional flours made from the dehydrating and grinding of wheat and would go directly from the produce aisle to the kitchen.

I imagine a world where people feel empowered in their kitchen to turn nutrient-rich vegetables into breads that nourish them and their children. I imagine a feeling of independence regained. They would no longer be limited by their eat-on-the-run options. People everywhere would be using vegetables, seeds, and nuts, along with their own creativity, to make convenience food that they love and that keeps them and their family healthy.



What a beautiful world that would be!

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# What Is Bread-Free Bread?

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A previously unknown way to make “breads” from fresh vegetables and seeds, using common tools from the average kitchen.

While exploring bread, its ingredients and mass appeal, I came to a couple of conclusions about the way I was making bread. First, bread-free bread is *not* a traditional bread, and some may say it's not bread at all, because historically breads are made from flour and water. The definition of bread is strictly limited to flour, flour meal, and water. Here is *Merriam-Webster's* definition of *bread*: (1) “a baked food made from a mixture of flour and water,” and (2) “a usually baked and leavened food made of a mixture whose basic constituent is flour or meal.”

You, like me, may question this simple and extremely limited definition when we have experienced unlimited varieties of breads in just our lifetime. Think about the long list of breads in your history: yeast rolls, fruit bread, flatbread, quick bread, corn bread, pancakes, tortillas, muffins, biscuits, not to mention tall, short, chewy, fluffy, dark, light, and so on. Yet, they are all mainly composed of these ingredients: flour or meal, water, and yeast. Even potato and corn breads contain mainly wheat flour. All flavorings, herbs, and fruits that we have enjoyed in our breads are tiny in volume when compared to the volume of wheat flour in bread.

What is flour? Historically, flour has been made from wheat and other grains. But should we assume this? What is *flour* exactly? *Merriam-Webster's* defines *flour* this way:

(1) powder made from a grain (especially wheat) that is used in cooking for making bread, cakes, etc.; (2) a product consisting of finely milled wheat; *also* : a similar product made from another grain or food product (as dried potatoes or fish); (3) a fine soft powder.

Here's where we gain a bit more wriggle room when defining what bread is. The “fine soft powder” used to make bread ... could be made from anything! Anything that can be dried and ground into a powder, that is. This makes sense as many alternative breads today are made from dehydrated ground roots, seeds, nuts, beans, and gluten-free grains.

Now that our definition of *flour* has been expanded, I'd like to point out that working with any traditional flour can be extremely messy, requiring much cleanup effort. When I made flour breads as research, I was horrified to find a layer of fine food dust covering all items in a four-foot radius, including my floor and rugs. Most would agree that the dehydrating and grinding of flours should best be performed outside the home. Anyone making homemade bread today will need to purchase flour products and expect a messy result. That's why people just purchase bread that's already baked, and leave the mixing and baking to industry.

So what's bread-free bread? Read on.



### **1. Bread-free bread is a *baked form of raw bread*.**

The raw food movement creates traditional foods using only raw ingredients that remain raw and never get cooked. Raw foods do not use flours or grains unless they are prepared by soaking, for the most part. To mimic traditional wheat-based foods, such as pie crusts, crackers, and breads, the raw food movement utilizes two things (1) sticky ingredients that will hold foods together, such as flaxseeds; and (2) dehydrators that dry foods out with fans and very low heat. Raw crackers that are ‘baked’ in dehydrators over several hours, even days, are crunchy with similar textures to traditional baked crackers. They also handle well and store easily, too.

Raw food enthusiasts embrace a large variety and amount of nuts, enjoy raw dairy products, avoid highly processed foods, and avoid genetically engineered modified foods. They so desired they could eat beef tartare (raw ground beef) and ceviche, which is fish that has been “cooked” without heat. In general, they eat very few things that look or act like traditional breads.

### **2. Bread-free bread is a *new level of the Paleo diet*.**

Paleo followers eat only items that can be found and gathered in the environment, such as animals, insects, eggs, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.

They avoid highly processed foods—including oils, sugars, and flours—as well as farmed foods, such as dairy and grains. Paleo dieters eat very few items that look and act like traditional breads.

### **3. Bread-free bread can also be referred to as a quick bread, which is a baked good leavened by baking soda or baking powder instead of yeast.**

### **4. Bread-free bread can be called a flatbread because most are baked thin and flat.**

### **5. Bread-free bread can also be called a cake, muffin, or biscuit as it may mimic the shape, form, and texture of traditional cakes, muffins, or biscuits.**

### **6. Bread-free bread can also be called fruit bread if made with fruit.**

So, what *is* bread-free bread? The simplest answer is, “Bread that is made with nontraditional ingredients, but that looks and acts like bread.”



# Why Is Bread-Free Bread Healthier Than Other Breads?

Practically all other alternative breads are composed mainly of high-carbohydrate grains, such as rice; highly refined alternative starches such as tapioca flour; allergens, such as palm and nuts; and syrups or questionable sweeteners.

Although our understanding of what it means to be healthy has common characteristics that apply to everyone, health is individual as well. Our genetic markers are passed from one generation to the next, yet are influenced by our individual environments: factors such as air, water, toxic surfaces, toxic products, and food. I would argue that our health is impacted by our food environment the most. Our food environments encompass not only food ingredients and quality, but also water quality, supplements, and medicines. Our health not only comprises nutrients and toxicants but also is greatly influenced by *how* our body interacts with those nutrients and toxicants. Bread-free bread is healthy because it:



- does *not* contain modern bread's chemical ingredients, such as dough conditioners, preservatives, or artificial flavorings and colorings.
- does *not* contain high-carbohydrate flours that are linked to blood sugar spiking, which is linked to many diseases common in the United States, including heart disease, diabetes, and dementia. Even popular alternative breads often contain high-carbohydrate flours such as potato, rice, arrowroot, and tapioca.
- does *not* contain gluten, which is best known as an irritant in celiac disease but also affects far more people as a sensitivity, including intolerances to gluten as well. Gluten is a natural component of most grains that are used in bread. Gluten has also been altered so much by commercial agriculture that experts argue the protein is a new protein previously unknown to man—and to man's digestive tract. Gluten can also be highly processed and turned into its own product that is then used in a huge variety of food products, including ice cream and chewing gum, and no longer limited to bread products.

- does *not* contain the chemical azodicarbonamide, most commonly referred to as the yoga mat chemical because it's used in the manufacturing of yoga mats to give them that air-bubbly cushion. Azodicarbonamide is neither a food nor a food product but is allowed to be used in food products sold in the United States and is used primarily in the making of breads. When azodicarbonamide is baked, it breaks down into the chemical compounds semicarbazide and urethane, which may pose toxic risks of their own.
- does *not* contain most common food allergens in the United States. Food allergens and especially undiagnosed food sensitivities are linked to such autoimmune diseases as Crohn disease, Graves' disease, rheumatoid arthritis, fibromyalgia, and more.
- includes unprocessed dietary fiber from plants, which is considered healthy to the vast majority of people. Unprocessed high fiber is good on many levels: (1) fiber is needed to move food through our intestinal tract—it's like our conveyer belt; (2) while traveling through our intestines, good micro flora (probiotics) thrive in the high-fiber environment; and (3) bad bacteria and toxins are more easily and thoroughly eliminated if one eats a high-fiber diet.
- contains densely-packed nutrients from whole fresh foods, bringing a sense of satisfaction that lasts longer, with fewer feelings of hunger between meals. This is especially true of breads made from high-nutrient foods, such as kale.
- has more flavor, so adults as well as children find it easier to consume and desire to eat it again.
- is more filling than regular breads, causing most people to eat smaller meals. Maintaining energy between meals is a benefit which is often cited by those who eat bread-free bread.
- gives the bread maker control of the ingredients. The bread maker could choose organic fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs, as well as gluten-free ingredients, such as gluten-free baking powder.
- leaves the bread maker free to make substitutions that fit individual health preferences. For example, lemon juice can be used instead of vinegar, or fresh eggs could be replaced with a variety of egg substitutes.





# The Desire That Created Bread-Free Bread

How did an ordinary girl whose only previous professional experience with food was as a worker in the fast-food industry for six years, get the idea to make alternative breads from nothing but fresh food and seeds?

Living below the poverty line, I grew up on starch-based meals at home, the cheapest food available in high school, and all the fast food I could eat as soon as I was old enough to work in their restaurants. I continued this diet through my twenties and thirties as I worked my way through college, then as a professional editor in film and video. By the time I was 34 years old I was often unable to work because I was sick in bed. I suffered from mold allergies, several seasonal allergies, frequent headaches and migraines, hot flashes, swollen ankles, shortness of breath, adrenal fatigue, exercise exhaustion, chronic sinus drip, heavy sneezing, frequent sore throat, poor concentration, depression, irritability, anxiety, tinnitus, racing heart episodes, and painful periods. I took huge amounts of over-the-counter medications for most of my life as my focus was only about relieving the discomfort of my ailments.

As I neared my 40th birthday my doctor put me on heavy antibiotics and steroids to help me kick a severe cold that I had had for weeks. This protocol was needed for several weeks before the symptoms subsided. My doctor had no idea how to prevent a similar illness in my future. A friend who is a chiropractor and nutritionist suggested I get tested for food sensitivities, which are also known as delayed food allergies because they can manifest hours or days later. I took the test, avoided the foods I was shown to be sensitive to, and that's when I got better. I felt like I was 19 again, with extra energy to burn.

I began cooking from scratch with organic ingredients. I ate more raw fresh ingredients, too. My bread, cracker, and chip selections at grocery stores had withered to a handful of choices due to my sensitivity to yeasts and dairy. It was a difficult adjustment. Sunflower seed butter and organic deli meats wrapped in three-ingredient tortillas, or on simple ingredient crackers that I had found, were what enabled me to maintain my diet and yet continue eating in a similar way to how I had my whole life—convenient finger foods requiring low to no cooking.

My doctor didn't understand how avoiding such foods as broccoli, salmon, sesame, black pepper, dairy, and yeast were helping me, but she was excited to hear that all my chronic health ailments had disappeared practically overnight.



I am forever grateful to my friend Dr. Rick Barrett for testing me for food sensitivities, awakening me to a lifelong ignored reality that food can hurt, and for kick-starting my health food journey. That first food sensitivity test opened my eyes and caused an irreversible paradigm shift in me about food and health.

Yet I must give the lion's share of the credit for my health success to those few bread-related choices that helped me: tortillas and crackers. It was the availability of these products that allowed me to achieve my first dramatic shift in diet. At that time, choices for alternative bread products were extremely limited, unlike today. And yet, I see a need for even more choices. Choices that don't involve refined carbohydrates, or nut flours that rank among the top ten food allergens. Like me, you want healthy alternative breads that won't spike your blood sugar, or scare dinner guests who have nut allergies. I want your transition into a bread-free bread world to be full of abundant, tasty healthy options, options that will work with any diet and lifestyle. That's why I wrote this cookbook.



## GO DEEPER

After experiencing my paradigm shift in food and health consciousness, it was normal to share my experience with others. People were fascinated by the details I had noticed over time, concerning the interactivity of my personal health and food. Details like how black pepper made me belch like a frat boy, sugar made my ears ring loudly with tinnitus, and dairy caused sinus headaches two and a half days later.

Some people were so impressed with my boundless energy, weight loss, and stories about

what I call food powers, that they got tested for food sensitivities, too. And their ailments also went away once they changed their diets! My husband, Joe, was one of the first to get tested. His test showed a high sensitivity to paprika and dairy. He could eat one or the other and not experience asthma symptoms. But if he ate them together, he would experience asthma symptoms within minutes. We easily concluded that his adult-onset asthma diagnosis was really a combination food allergy. He has avoided foods containing both paprika and dairy ever since, and eventually gave up dairy altogether.

In 2009 I created the website [www.foodpowers.com](http://www.foodpowers.com), where I posted interviews with others about their delayed food allergies. During these years I read a lot of articles and scoured professional websites about food allergies and food sensitivities. I had learned that sugars and starches were inherently bad for me due to my chronic sensitivities to baker's and brewer's yeasts. I complained often over the lack of alternative breads and crackers. Sprouted-grain breads made me sick. Gluten-free breads were full of highly refined starches that contribute to spikes in blood sugar and yeast (Candida) overgrowth. Paleo breads are exciting, but they more often than not seem like corn bread than like traditional sandwich bread. Also, Paleo breads are most often made from coconut flour and almond meal. If I eat almonds and other nuts often, then I can become sensitive to them and at that point they are no longer healthy for me.

I expanded my ability to cook from scratch. I cooked around my food sensitivities and those of my husband. Because most popular alternative breads weren't good options for me or my husband, I often felt locked out of quick and convenient meals and snacks, such as sandwiches, crackers, cookies, and tortillas. Additionally, my husband disliked most vegetable dishes. He never seemed to enjoy them. He just preferred meat protein and the largest percentage of his meals were just that.

Starting with just a desire, then a vision, I began turning vegetables into traditional baked goods. I created hamburger buns using only spinach and seeds. I made sandwich bread out of okra. I made biscuits from squash. To my delight, my husband (and everyone else) ate the vegetables disguised as breads and even asked for more.

I knew I was on to something. Being a citizen advocate for increasing food sensitivity awareness, I knew that millions of people have food allergies and food sensitivities to standard ingredients in bread, such as gluten, wheat, yeast, dairy and nuts. So I started to share a few of my recipes. The result was overwhelming praise. People asked for more including leaders in body building, weight loss, fitness, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles.



Over the last year, I have been perfecting these innovative recipes so anyone can follow them. Using pictures and clear descriptions, home bakers can make their own bread-free bread—without traditional grains, gluten, yeast, sugar, refined oils, highly refined carbs, or nuts—in their own kitchen using basic kitchen tools.



# Challenges to Creation

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The inspiration moment, the repeated failures, twists and turns that led to the perfect bread-free bread recipes.

The foremost challenge was getting bread-free bread to act like bread, not like quick breads or dressing. Second, I wanted bread that truly reflected its name. Call me naive, but when I looked for spinach bread recipes, I really wanted bread with spinach as the first ingredient, not the last.

Now, to make vegetables act like bread, you must understand why traditional bread acts like bread. So I began baking muffins and quick breads. Then I started to create my own recipes for muffins and quick breads, made from scratch. I wanted to know, would they work without oil? Without eggs? With an egg alternative? Without yeast?

I tried baking with yeast twice, and then fed the results to our neighborhood possum—because even when yeast is surrounded by veggies, it makes me sick. By the way, there's a good probability that you, too, are affected negatively by yeasts, fungus, and molds. And because yeast isn't a necessary ingredient to make breads, I concluded that it was an unnecessary and unwanted ingredient. Next, I found a yeast alternative and made the same recipes to compare them.

## WORKING BACKWARD

Traditional bread recipes always start with dry ingredients and then liquid ingredients are added. Making breads from mostly vegetables required me to turn that concept around. I had to think of what healthy dry ingredients I could add to my liquid puréed veggies.

I eventually became adept at turning any vegetable into bread on the first try. In fact, my first published recipe for veggie bread is still a nonspecific base recipe that is included in this cookbook—for those adventurous, nonconformist chefs out there. With the help of *Austin All Natural* magazine, I gave the world the key to turning veggies into bread—using one's own kitchen!

It became clear that, instead of using one master recipe, I had to create individual kinds of bread. And so, as I continued to play with my base recipe in my kitchen, I wrote down all my combinations.

## GOODBYE DEHYDRATOR

With the help of the Krazy Kracker Lady's (Abeba Wright) cookbooks, I had successfully used my large, noisy dehydrator to make raw crackers. In fact, when she shared her first raw bread recipe, I got inspired to make my own baked grain-free breads I had been dreaming about. To create recipes that would appeal to most readers, I couldn't use a dehydrator. Seriously, I am not about to force you to buy what is essentially a large space heater that will also take away productive counter space. My husband tells the same joke to everyone about my dehydrator. Joe will say, "She asks me if I want healthy grain-free crackers, I say 'yes,' then she tells me they'll be ready in twelve hours!" There's a truth to most jokes, which is what makes them

funny. A dehydrator requirement for bread-free bread was my first reluctant casualty. Truth be told, I still make raw crackers in my dehydrator, in the winter, in my garage. And I don't ask my husband if wants any until they're ready to eat.

## HOW MANY CUPS ARE IN A CARROT?

After sending out my first recipe to a core group of friends, I received feedback that made me realize that I had to conform to the norm and measure each ingredient. I had gotten use to my own style. For example any recipe requiring for “one medium tomato” isn't specific enough apparently because “medium” is a relative concept. Also, my instructions that said, “Flavor to taste,” had immediately crippled enough friends into nonaction. So I caved in reluctantly to rigidity and formality of the recipe-making business and began to measure my herbs and spices instead of eyeballing them.

You may notice that my recipes were built around standard vegetable packaging, such as spinach or baby kale (5 ounces), okra (1 quart), and nopales (12.5 ounces of cactus strips). Other vegetables, such as tomatoes, which are sold by weight had to be diced so that they could be measured. I quickly learned that package ounces do not equal weight ounces. I'm grateful for each mistake as they each bore the fruit of knowledge.

## WHAT IS PAN LINING PAPER?

Reynolds Pan Lining Paper has foil on one side and parchment paper on the other. Before Pan Lining Paper, I had tried every way I could think of to grease or oil my pans. All or some of the bread would stick to the pan. I tried wax paper next, and it worked much better than oil but the wax paper stuck to the bread, sometimes badly. I secretly suspected that some of the wax might be melting into the bread, too. Then a friend suggested using parchment paper, and after the very first use I knew it was the key to making a successful bread, every time, and it made me happy. Just before last Christmas I stumbled upon Pan Lining Paper and bought it. The foil grips the pan—no more sliding paper—as I spread the wet batter across my jelly-roll pans. The parchment side of the Pan Lining Paper removes easily from each bread after baking, and it keeps jelly-roll pans and cookie sheets clean! “Joy to the world!” I sang out loud.





# Tools You Will Use

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A list of basic kitchen tools to make recipes in this cookbook, with a short description of each.

## BLENDER

Most bread-free breads were created with a blender to turn solid foods into liquid. A blender with a tamper tool is preferred but not required. Built-in tampers allow you to push the blender's contents into the blade without worrying about your implement reaching the blade itself and being destroyed. Built-in tamper tools make the blending process faster. If your blender does not have a built-in tamper tool, just stop the blender and push the contents toward the blade while the blender is in the off position. Do this as needed.



## SINGLE-SERVE BLENDER, OR IMMERSION STICK BLENDER

These modern blenders are perfect for blending jobs that are too small for a normal size-blender. For example, my microwave recipes that were created to serve just one person work best when blended by a machine, not by hand.

## FOOD PROCESSOR

You could use a food processor instead of a blender for most of these recipes. When you do this, the breads will have a more visible texture. A food processor is also great at grinding seeds into meal with varying levels of coarseness. Use a mini food processor to grind a small amount of seeds into meal.

## COFFEE/SPICE GRINDER

These affordable handheld grinders are perfect for small jobs. They are fast, durable, and lined with stainless steel. Food processors and blenders are too big for small grinding jobs. A

an alternative, you could grind a large amount of seeds into meal to be stored and used later. Just be aware that seed meal doesn't keep fresh as long as whole seeds do when stored.

## **PAN LINING PAPER, PARCHMENT PAPER, OR NONSTICK BAKING LINER**

Each of these items work great but I prefer to use Pan Lining Paper for baking bread-free breads. Parchment paper slides easily, whereas baking liners produce edges drier than the middle. Pan Lining Paper has parchment paper on one side and foil on the other. The foil side grips your baking sheet, minimizing sliding. Without the protection of the Pan Lining Paper the dough often touches the baking pan itself and becomes baked on. With Pan Lining Paper my baking sheets stay clean and just need to cool before being stored or reused.

## **ANGLED ICING SPATULA**

Much faster than using a spatula to level the batter thickness. Speed is important when making these breads.

## **BAKING SHEET (A.K.A. JELLY-ROLL PAN)**

It's a cookie sheet with sides. It makes shaping the batter easier for baking. No spillovers!

## **COOKIE SHEET**

A flat, thin baking sheet with no sides.

## **LOAF, CAKE, AND PIE PANS**

For a handful of recipes I use a couple of other pans worth mentioning here:

- 1.5-quart loaf pan (8½ × 4½ × 2½ inches)
- 8-inch square baking pan
- 9-inch round cake pan
- 8½-inch pie pan
- microwave-proof mug or bowl large enough to hold 20 ounces of liquid

## **DOUGH WHISK OR BALLOON WHISK**

I'd like you to consider buying a dough whisk for under \$20. A dough whisk does the same work as a spoon and whisk, but it doesn't trap the dough the way a balloon whisk can, which costs you time. And it's faster to clean. Balloon whisks also work and are preferred for the thinner batters, such as for corn bread and cake.



## **COOLING RACK**

Nothing fancy, just keeps breads above the counter to help them cool and expel moisture. If anyone in your house has food allergies, be sure to wash your rack after each use to avoid cross-contamination.

## **MEASURING CUPS AND SPOONS**

I now own about four sets of measuring spoons, but one set is really all you need. I prefer measuring seed meals in multicup measuring cups that are tall and thin because they provide faster and more accurate measurements. I also own a set of measuring cups with handles to measure liquids and chopped vegetables.

## **SPATULAS**

You will need spatulas to remove your batter from blender containers and bowls. You will also shape the batter when transferring to the baking sheet.

# Ingredient Substitutions

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Awareness of food allergies and food sensitivities is increasing, so with this in mind, I created this section to foster awareness about ingredient substitutions that are relevant to most of my bread-free bread recipes.

## ALMOND MEAL, SUNFLOWER SEED MEAL, AND PUMPKIN SEED MEAL

These three ingredients can be used interchangeably but with these two precautions: (1) Pumpkin seeds have a distinctive flavor that can't be masked easily; and (2) sunflower seeds can easily replace almond meal in recipes but as the amount increases, so should the coarseness of the sunflower seed meal. For example, to substitute sunflower seed meal in either banana bread recipe, don't use a fine grind of sunflower seed meal; use a coarse grind instead. Almond meal and almond flour are interchangeable and both are gluten-free.

## FLAXSEED MEAL VS. GOLDEN FLAXSEED MEAL

The two types of flaxseed meals can be used interchangeably. The only discernable difference between the two is the color. Using a golden flaxseed meal will keep the bread a lighter color.

It's simple and economical to grind your own flaxseeds. Use a coffee/spice grinder, mini food processor, or personal blender with a dry blade to grind small amounts. For a larger quantity, use a regular-size blender with a dry blade or a food processor. To keep flaxseed meal fresh, grind only as much meal as you need, or store larger quantities in a covered container away from light and heat. Flaxseed meal can be expected to last up to 10 months in a dark, cool pantry, or longer in the freezer.

## FLAXSEED MEALS VS. CHIA SEED MEAL (ALSO CALLED CHIA FLOUR AND CHIA POWDER)

These seed meals are *not* interchangeable even though they perform the same function—binding blended veggies or fruits together to form breads. The textures of flaxseed meal and chia seed meal are completely different after being baked. Chia seed meal produces a more spongy, or rubbery bread texture, whereas the flaxseed meals produce a lighter and fluffier bread texture. Additionally, chia seeds are much harder than flaxseeds and are more difficult to grind into a powder form, which is why chia seed meal products have varying gritty textures when touched. Because of this, chia seed meals often require much longer exposure times to liquids, to soften them, before they can be baked.

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