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Ancestral Foods Lessons:

Chia

ALIMENTOS ANCESTRALES: CHIA

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LA SEMILLA FOOD CENTER

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Rubi is a lifelong student of elders, poets, and writers in both the US and Mexico, and holds a graduate degree in community health from UC Berkeley. She serves as Director of Storytelling and Development at La Semilla Food Center in Anthony, NM. Through that role, she spearheads efforts to uplift the foodways wisdom of people of the Paso del Norte region and increase connection with the Chihuahuan Desert ecosystem. She worked with La Semilla's Policy Director V Quevedo and illustrator/editor Zeke Peña to create the zine *Food, Land, and Us: A Look at the Farm Bill from the Paso del Norte Region*.

Her documentary poetry book, *Inventos Míos*, is inspired by the history of nixtamalization and its current practice in the El Paso region. It received the 2019 Tejas Poetry Book Award from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies. Her work has been featured in podcasts such *Proof* (from *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister*, and *Words on a Wire*.

BIOGRAFIA DE LA AUTORA

Durante su vida, Rubi ha sido la estudiante de poetas, escritores, maestras y maestros tanto en los Estados Unidos como en México, y tiene un título posgrado en Salud Comunitaria de UC Berkley. Ella es Directora de Narración y Desarrollo en La Semilla Food Center en Anthony, NM. Liderando los esfuerzos para elevar la sabiduría de los hábitos alimenticios de la gente de la región Paso del Norte y aumentar la conexión con el ecosistema del desierto de Chihuahua. Rubi trabajó con la Directora de Política de La Semilla, V Quevedo, y el ilustrador/editor Zeke Peña en la creación de la revista *Comida, Tierra y Nosotros: Un Vistazo al Proyecto de Ley Agrícola desde la Región del Paso del Norte*.

Su libro de poesía documental, *Inventos Míos*, esta inspirado en la historia de la nixtamalización y su practica actual en la región de El Paso. En el 2019, recibió el premio Tejas Poetry Book Award de la Asociación Nacional de los Estudios Chicanas y Chicanos. El trabajo de Rubi ha aparecido en podcasts como *Proof*(de *America's Test Kitchen*), *Toasted Sister* y *Words on a Wire*.



Get Ready to Explore Chia!



Hello! You are going to learn about chia! Here are some things to keep in mind before you start.



Be safe

Practice cutting a lime or lemon with your plastic chef's knife. If you need to, ask a grown-up for help.

Clean up

When you are done, clean up. Clean the table. Put trash in the garbage can. Put dirty dishes in the sink.

CHIA AND ME

Have you ever heard of chia? Draw or write what you know here. If you do not know much about chia, draw or write what you want to learn.





Story and Uses of Chia

Chia is the name of a plant and its seed. Chia plants have flowers that are blueish purple and tiny seeds that range in color from white to light gray to black.

Chia is original to the Indigenous people of what is currently Mexico - the Mexica (sometimes called Aztecs) in central Mexico, as well as the Maya in the Yucatan peninsula. They use chia as food and as medicine.



When the Spanish arrived to this continent, they wanted the land of the Indigenous people. They also wanted Indigenous people to change their beliefs. Indigenous people used chia to pray. The Spanish banned chia. Some people still grew it. Thanks to them, we still have chia.

Chia gives people a lot of energy. The famous Tarahumara runners in Mexico make a chia drink to prepare for their long runs. Americans call chia a 'super food' because it is so healthy. It has a lot of calcium, which helps our bones be strong. It has good fats that our brain needs to think. It has protein that help our body make muscles.

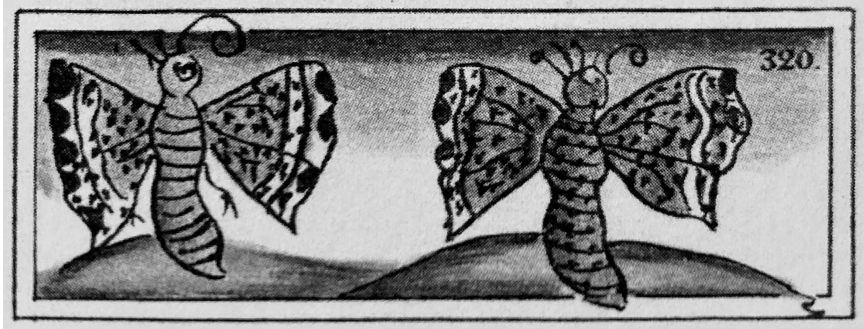


FOOD SAYINGS

Metaphors & Similes

Food can help us describe things. A **metaphor** is a way of describing something in a way that isn't literally true but helps people understand an idea. For example, if someone eats something spicy and says "my mouth is on fire" – we know there are no real flames in their mouth, but we quickly understand that their mouth is burning with the spice that they ate.

In ancient Mexico, there was a butterfly that people called "chia butterfly" (chia papalotl, in Nahuatl). Here is a picture.



Can you guess why people called it "chia butterfly"?

The butterfly was not literally made out of chia, of course! But it had small dots all over its wings. It was **speckled**. So, the phrase 'chia butterfly' is a **metaphor** – a way to say speckled butterfly.

Can you think of your own metaphors using foods?



Here are some food metaphors from around the world:

- **"Butter fingers"** (English/United States)
When things tend to slip out of someone's hands.
- **"Couch potato"** (English/United States)
When someone is not very active and watches a lot of TV.
- **"Bring home the bacon"** (English/United States) and **"Bring bread butter"** (American Sign Language/United States)
Both mean to earn the money for the family.
- **"We need new meatballs in the soup"** (Danish/ Denmark)
We need new ideas or energy.
- **"A day of honey, a day of onions"** (Israel)
A good day, a bad day.
- **"If your dear friend is honey, don't lick him all up."** (Morocco):
If your friend is very generous, don't just keep taking from them.

A **simile** also describes something by comparing it to something else. But a simile uses the words "as" or "like." For example, "He's as tall as a tree." Here is a food simile from Iraq: "She is like a tomato." This compliment means someone is easy to get along with in any situation.

Vocabulary

Here are some words you may have learned in this section.

Metaphor: A way of describing something by stating it is another well known thing with those same qualities.

Speckled: when something is covered or marked with a lot of small spots or patches or color."

Simile: A way of describing something by comparing it to another thing. Similes include the words 'like' or 'as.'

Were any other words new to you? If so, you can circle them, and look up their meaning in a dictionary.

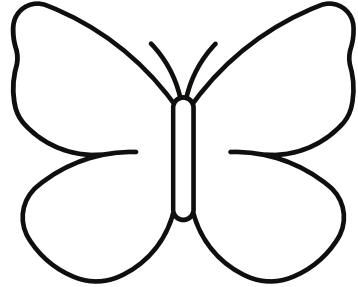


MAKE A "CHIA BUTTERFLY"

Relax while you work. If you can play soft music, do it!

You will need:

- Butterfly outline
- Something to color with (crayons, colored pencils, or markers)
- Glue (liquid or stick)
- A pinch of chia seeds



Directions:

Step 1. On a separate sheet of paper, draw the outline of a butterfly. Color in the butterfly any way you want.

Step 2. When you are done coloring, you are ready for glue. If you are using liquid glue, put some dots of glue all around the wings of the butterfly. If you are using a glue stick, apply it to the wings of the butterfly.

Step 3. Then, sprinkle a pinch of chia seeds on the wings over the glue to make it a 'chia butterfly.' The wings will be speckled with chia seeds.

Step 4. When you are done, enjoy your art. Invite people in your home to see it. Maybe you or they can take a picture of it.





Let's Make a Chia Drink!



You can make this drink with a lime or lemon that you have at home. If you use lime, you are making limeade. If you use lemon, you are making lemonade.

You Will Need:

- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon lime or lemon juice
- 1 to 2 tablespoons honey or sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon chia seeds
- Optional: 2 or 3 ice cubes
- 1 cup
- 1 spoon



Safety Alert!

Practice cutting a lime or lemon with your plastic knife or ask a grown-up for help!

Instructions:

Step 1. Put the water and lime or lemon juice in your cup. Add the honey. Mix well with a spoon, not too hard or fast so your drink stays inside. Add the chia seeds and mix again. If you want, add some ice cubes.

Step 2. Taste your drink. If it is too tangy, it may need a little bit more water or sugar. If it is too sweet, it may need more water or lime or lemon juice. If it is too watery, it may need more lime or lemon juice.

Step 3. Using our sense of taste to fine tune recipes is a very important skill!



AMAZING CHIA

Write your answers to the next 4 questions.

Name one way chia is good for our bodies.

Why do you think the Spanish banned chia? Why do you think indigenous people continued to grow it?

Write a food metaphor or simile.

Did you adjust your chia drink recipe based on your sense of taste? If so, how?

