Blue corn chips? Are they healthier? [1]

Dear Alice,

Are blue corn chips any healthier for you than chips made from regular corn?

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's often said that the more (naturally) colorful your plate is, the healthier that meal is for you. This saying holds true in the corn arena: Blue corn does contain more of the amino acid lysine and the antioxidant anthocyanin than "regular" yellow corn; however, it loses much of these nutrients when it's processed into a chip. Blue corn chips may be slightly more nutritious in this sense, but if you're trying to increase the amounts of lysine or antioxidants in your diet, fresh and whole fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins are much better sources.

Research has also found that blue corn tortillas (fresh, not fried into chips) contain more protein than their yellow or white corn counterparts. In addition, blue corn tortillas have a lower starch content and lower glycemic index (GI) than regular corn tortillas. Both of these factors may be helpful to people on low GI diets, such as diabetics, because food with a lower starch and low GI breaks down more slowly into sugars absorbed by the blood stream and can help people avoid spikes in blood sugar levels.

Keep in mind that chips of any color are often fried and can be high in fat and calories, so it's probably best to not make them a regular snack. Baked chips or crackers may be a healthier alternative, especially if they're made with whole grains. Look for the words "whole grain" or "whole" before the grain's name on the ingredients label to make sure it falls into this category. Fiber is another important consideration in a healthy snack, and not all whole grain products are high in fiber, so be sure to look at fiber content on the nutrition label. For more information on whole grains and fiber, check out some of the Related Q&As below.

Alice!

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