

## Grandpa Po's Originals (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Nut-Free)

Hannah Kaminsky, My Sweet Vegan ~ Browsing through aisles of snack food at the grocery store is like walking through a minefield for me. Nutritional bombs lay in wait everywhere the eye can see, but each one sounds even more delicious than the next. Tempting those unwitting consumers who don't bother to check what goes into their snacks, it's a disaster waiting to happen. Even as an informed shopper, it's becoming harder and harder to make wise purchases. With false advertising covering every inch of the labels and soaring food prices forcing many to go the cheaper route (despite the price that must be paid with one's health), it's enough to send anyone fleeing from the stores. But don't give up hope - there are a few gems buried in amongst the dirt, and Grandpa Po's Originals is one of them.

Hidden inside each unassuming re-sealable pouch is a mix of popcorn kernels and toasted soy beans, packing in a good helping of both protein and fiber, and providing a healthy answer to this snacking dilemma. Found in a total of three subtle variations, I was only lucky enough to try two, but I can imagine that if the last one follows suit, it would be a worthy purchase as well.

The natural place to start is with the most basic, and Slightly Unsalted appeared to be just that. What I couldn't have guessed was just how much flavor this "basic" offering would have. From the first bite, I was completely blown away. It tasted just like movie theater popcorn! How could this be?! My mind was reeling for a minute, trying to make sense of how four straightforward and healthful ingredients could produce that familiar salty, indulgent taste. Not at all greasy like I had remembered the chemical- and dairy-laden original being, the tiny kernels were perfectly crisp and crunchy. Punctuated with a serious handful of nutty soybeans, the simple mix of textures and flavors was far better than I could have ever anticipated. Just short of being dangerously addictive, I wouldn't imagine that a bag of this could ever last long in my home.

Munching on a handful of Slightly Spicy next, I wasn't sure that I had picked up the right bag at first; not even a hint of spice tickled my tongue. A few moments passed, and then all of a sudden, the bells started ringing and there was fire going in the back of my throat! How sneakily the flavor had crept up on me! After that startling experience, I knew what to expect and found the remainder of the bag delightful, but it's only terribly spicy after the first few mouthfuls. It doesn't take long for your taste buds to adjust, so it's an excellent method of encouraging portion control: To get that hot kick every time, you only need to eat a little bit in one sitting! Mostly peppery above anything else, it's nothing too exotic for the spice-fearing among us.

Finally, a savory snack that's appropriate for just about everyone, and tasty by any standards, too. This is one satisfying option that I don't feel bad about grabbing when my energy levels dip between meals. Best of all, there are so few ingredients that it's impossible to hide foreign additives or questionable content in there. The only thing unusual about the list is "a sense of humor," which is included in ample supply in every bag.