

Taste-Testing the Evolution of Hemp Protein Powder

Always on the cutting edge in the hemp world, Manitoba Harvest has released the world's first 100% water soluble hemp protein concentrate. So what does this mean? You know how hemp powders tend to lend a slightly gritty or sandy taste to smoothies, and how you can't simply blend them with water for a quick protein boost or recovery drink? Well Hemp Pro 70 is here to solve those issues.

But, that isn't to say there isn't a place in this world for all of the hemp protein powders. In fact, I had the opportunity to taste-test and compare the entire Manitoba Harvest hemp protein powder line (ooh, with the exception of the dark chocolate and vanilla flavored ones … must find!), and I was quite surprised at the different tastes and virtues they each possessed. They are all pretty basic, made simply from hemp seeds, but as you can see by looking at the pictures, these are completely different products …

Hemp Pro 70 (70% protein) – The new kid on the block, this wonder hemp protein concentrate really does perform as advertised. To taste this is the naturally "sweetest" of the three. I put that in quotes, as this isn't a sugary protein powder mix, it is just the hemp and natural plant extracts. But it wasn't bitter, as I had expected. In fact, it had a very mild sweetness that melded nicely in my smoothies rather than overwhelming in any way. Also, it was palatable on its own, just shaken (in one of those great Amazing Grass shakers!) with water.

As for the texture, it is much like the taste, no dominating grit, just a nice smooth powder that really does blend in! I have been taste-testing quite a few protein powders lately, and I must say, this is one of my favorites. It even has a better feel and taste than brown rice protein, which tends to be very thick and powdery.

Beyond smoothies, I found that Hemp Pro works wonderfully as a healthy thickener in salad dressings; an excellent way to sneak a little more protein in. It changes the taste slightly, so be sure to accommodate for this, but in terms of texture, it is virtually seamless.

Hemp Protein Powder (50% protein) – Though it is the middle of the pack in terms of protein content, this powder was the grittiest in texture of the three. I still didn't find it off-putting, but it won't be as soluble in water (or dressings) as the Hemp Pro. It was the second in line in sweetness, beginning to taste a bit more like hemp seeds than the Hemp Pro. Less protein, rougher texture, not as sweet … you might be wondering "Why choose this one over the Hemp Pro?"

Well, as mentioned, they all have their virtues. The 50% hemp protein is perfect for those who want a little more balance and don't have as high of protein requirements. The lower protein is balanced with some extra fiber and a higher quantity of Omega-3's (1200 mg per serving, compared to 800 mg per serving in the Hemp Pro and 600 mg in the Hemp & Fiber). Plus, it this protein powder is cold milled; a process which some people may prefer.

Organic Hemp & Fiber Protein Powder – The name of this one pretty much gives away the benefits of choosing this product … certified organic and higher in fiber (14 g per serving!). Surprisingly, this protein powder is in the middle ground in terms of texture – finer than the 50% protein, but just a bit coarser than the Hemp Pro. However, of the three, it tastes the most genuinely like hemp seeds. Though my taste buds initially liked the sweeter Hemp Pro, there was something more comforting about the natural seedy taste of the Hemp & Fiber Powder.

Again, perfect for smoothies, but due to the seedier taste and lack of solubility, it won't perform as well when simply mixed with water or milk alternative. However, it will probably still work nicely as a thickener in things such as salad dressings.

Just keep in mind that this (and the other) protein powders should be used raw, heating too much will destroy those wonderful Omega-3's. It should go well in your morning hot cereal (once cooked), but avoid adding the protein powders to anything before they head to the stove or oven.

For myself, the Hemp Pro 70 has already proven insanely useful; it is all but gone! However, I am also eager to incorporate more of the Organic Hemp & Fiber; I like that it is organic, a bit closer to its natural state, and well rounded in nutrition.

Though also sold in stores (think Whole Foods, natural food stores, supplements aisles, etc.), all Manitoba Harvest products can be purchased from their online store, and most if not all are available at a discount from Amazon Grocery. This is a third party review by Alisa Fleming, author of *Go Dairy Free: The Guide & Cookbook*. For more information on these products, see the Manitoba Harvest Website.