
Eating for Mental Health

There are many different foods that can help to support healthy brain function, relieve brain fog, promote brain growth and even aid in delaying or lowering the chance of developing dementia or Alzheimer's.

1. Fatty fish contain special fats that help with brain function and for younger humans, brain development.
2. Protein also helps to generate serotonin, the brains "happy feels" stimulator. Specifically, Tryptophan- YUP- that's you're Thanksgiving Day nap inducing amino acid! Tryptophan is actually found in many proteins besides turkey; such as salmon, chicken eggs and beans.
3. Decreased selenium, folate and numerous B vitamins have been linked to depression, fatigue and insomnia, Broccoli, leafy greens and fish are good sources of these.

Anyone notice a pattern in foods listed so far???.....SALMON!

Research on Eating and Mental Health:

Research has shown that mental health is not just affected by diet, *but diet affects mental health*. In a research article published on the National Institute of Health's NCBI website, it was noted that deficiencies in minerals, Omega 3 fatty acids and B vitamins could precipitate mental health issues. Regarding depression specifically, researchers say that nutrition and eating patterns such as, lack of appetite, skipping meals and cravings for sweets plays a role in preceding depression as well as effecting the "severity and the duration of depression". Nutritional neuroscience is an emerging discipline shedding light on the fact that nutritional factors are *intertwined* with human cognition, behavior, and emotions." (1)

"INTERTWINED with cognition, behavior and emotions." Let's take a moment to "digest" that statement..... Not only depression is linked to diet, but so is anxiety. Inflammation is the key factor, which can be diet or disease related. "Diet related" means consuming foods high in saturated or trans fats and refined sugars. "Disease related" means if you suffer from chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis/joint diseases or obesity.

BRAIN-GUT CONNECTION

There are many more research studies conducted that investigate the Brain -Gut connection. A lot of it is true, your mind *can* affect your body and in so many ways. For example, your nerves can give you "butterflies in your stomach"; anxiety/stress can trigger constipation or diarrhea. Also, vice versa, if you are having bouts of diarrhea, it can lead to depression or anxiety due to the need frequent bathroom use; or the uncomfortable pain of

persistent constipation. Foods that help with a healthy gut and healthy BMs are whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and pro/pre-biotics.

Probiotics are the microorganisms that line your digestive tract. They are found in yogurt and fermented foods. Prebiotics are the food that the probiotics eat. You can find them in foods like bananas, whole grains and vegetable.

With all of this in mind (no pun intended, but intended) I have devised a meal that will conquer all of these needs!

If you don't like fish but can eat Tuna (yes, there are some of you out there!), Albacore tuna is a great source of DHA/Omega-3's. See the below recipe for canned albacore tuna with Barley Tomato and Corn salad. IF you absolutely cannot stand to eat or are allergic to fish, chicken with this recipe would make a great substitute.

If you are vegan or not a fish lover: walnuts, chia seeds and flaxseed oil are high in omega 3's, but DHA made from these sources isn't as plentiful as it is from fatty fish. While it's ideal to get these nutrients through the food that you eat, a daily multi-vitamin with fish oil (DHA and/or EPA) can help you to achieve your nutrient goals. Check with your doctor to see if fish oil is right for you, as it can affect some medication's efficacy.

Check out a 2 bonus recipes below for mental health!

Bon Appetit!

~~ Chef Jen

(1) T. S. Sathyanarayana Rao, M. R. Asha, B. N. Ramesh, and K. S. Jagannatha Rao. Understanding nutrition, depression and mental illnesses. National Institute of Health, NCBI. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2738337/> 2008 Apr-Jun. Accessed 11 May 2020.

(2) Roma Pahwa; Amandeep Goyal; Pankaj Bansal; Ishwarlal Jialal. Chronic Inflammation. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK493173/> Last Update: March 2, 2020. Accessed 11 May 2020

Tuna, Farro & Corn Salad

Ingredients:

- ½ cup uncooked farro, rinsed
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- ½ cup corn kernels (canned or fresh)
- 2 tomatoes, seeded and diced
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- salt and pepper to taste
- ¼ cup fresh basil, sliced
- (1) 5 oz can albacore tuna, packed in water*

Preparation:

1. Cook farro: Bring according broth to a boil. Add rinsed farro to pot and return to a boil. Turn heat to medium and cook covered for 15-20 minutes. Drain and let cool. (This step can be done the night prior, if desired)
2. Transfer the cooled barley to a large bowl. Add the corn, green onions, and tomatoes; toss ingredients well.
3. In a small bowl whisk together, remaining ingredients until combined. Pour dressing over salad, and toss well to combine ingredients thoroughly. Can be made and refrigerated the night before.
4. Before serving, stir in basil and avocado, and allow salad to come to room temperature, if chilled, top with tuna.

* Alternative option to use 1 chopped or shredded, cooked chicken breast instead of tuna.

Roasted Salmon and Broccoli with Dijon Sauce

Adapted by Chef Jen

Ingredients:

- (4) 5 oz salmon fillets
- 2 large shallots, finely diced
- ½ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- 2 Tbsp water
- ¼ cup Dijon or grainy mustard
- 3 Tbsp chopped parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 bunches broccoli crowns
- 4 Tbsp olive oil

Preparation:

1. Pre-heat oven to 400°F. Pat dry salmon fillets, season lightly with salt and pepper. Line baking sheet with aluminum foil. Drizzle 2 Tbsp olive oil on foil. Center the 4 fillets in the pan.
2. Break off broccoli into florets and toss with 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper. Surround fillets with broccoli and bake for ~15-20 minutes. Or until thermometer in fish registers 145°F and broccoli is easily pierced with a fork.
3. While the fish and broccoli roast, chop parsley and set aside. Then, finely dice 2 large shallots. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in medium skillet, over medium heat, add shallots. Cook ~ 2-3 minutes or until tender. Add yogurt and 2 tbsp water, using a whisk (silicon whisk if using a non-stick pan) mix until blended, ~ 30 seconds. Remove from heat and mix in mustard.
4. Portion out salmon and broccoli on plates. Mix in 2 tbsp parsley into mustard sauce and spoon evenly over the 4 portions of salmon. Garnish with the rest of the parsley over the plate.