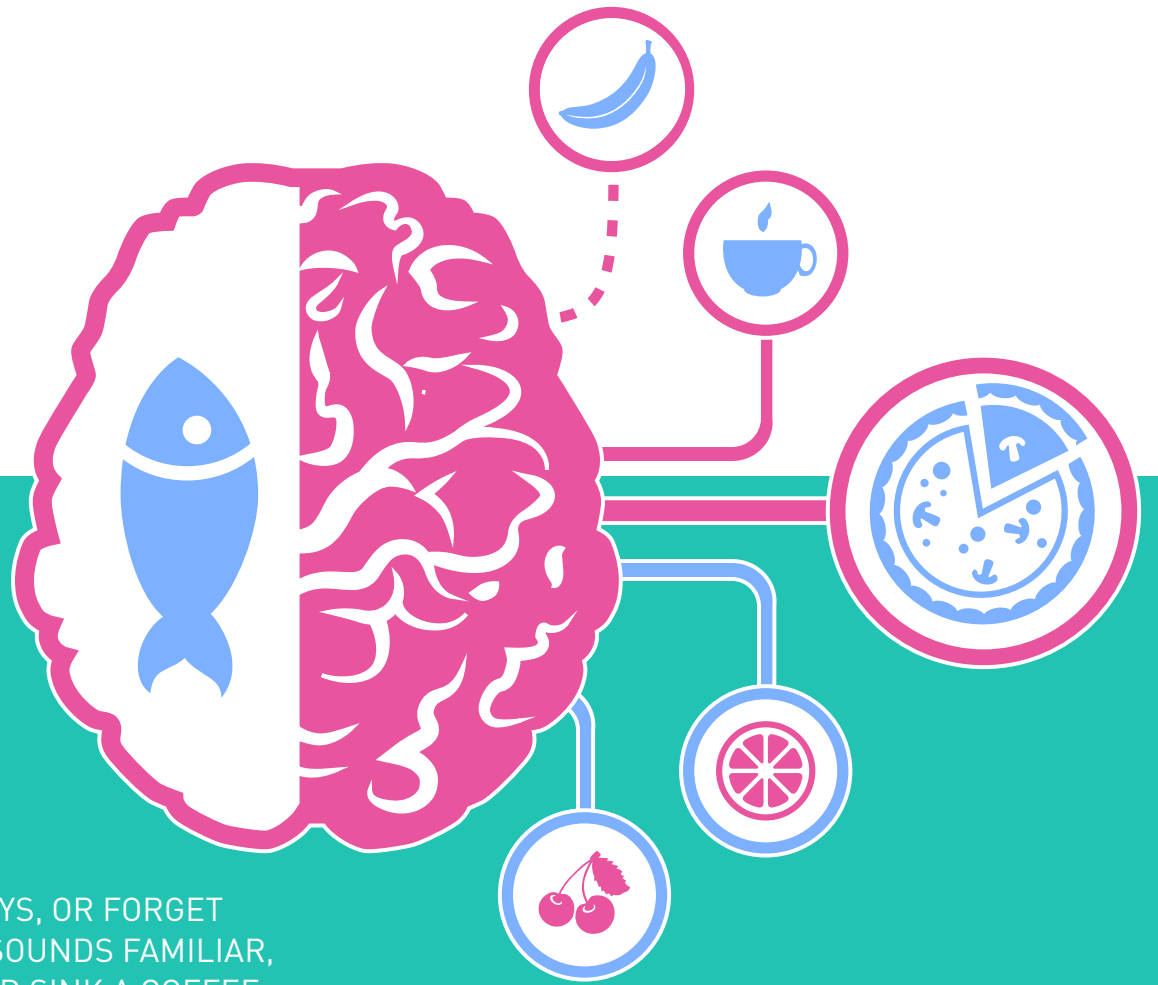


BRAIN FOOD



EVER FIND YOURSELF LOOKING FOR YOUR KEYS, OR FORGET WHAT YOU WENT INTO A ROOM FOR? IF THIS SOUNDS FAMILIAR, IT COULD BE TIME TO TUCK INTO A CURRY AND SINK A COFFEE. OH, AND SOME DARK CHOCOLATE! YEP, THESE BRAIN-BOOSTING – AND TASTY – INGREDIENTS CAN PROVIDE SPECIFIC BENEFICIAL EFFECTS FOR YOUR NOGGIN, WRITES BESTFIT'S EMMA KIRKE.



BERRIES

Berries are a strong source of polyphenols, especially anthocyanins. They have been shown to increase sharpness and speed of function in the brain areas that deplete fastest as we get older. So, adding them to your breakfast bowl or favourite smoothie will do more than sweeten you up in the morning, it may just sweeten you up permanently.



AVOCADO

Understanding the importance of essential fatty acids goes beyond muscular and hormonal benefits, which is why you should be swapping butter for avocado when it comes to baking cakes or bread. The cardiovascular and neuro-protective effects are immense and it has the same emulsifying effect, only with added body and brain benefits. It doesn't detract from the taste either.



NUTS

Nuts are a valuable source of vitamin E (except for peanuts and cashews), which is essential for protecting the brain against age-related damage. So go nuts for the nuts!



ORANGES

Everyone knows that oranges are rich in vitamin C, but they can also help the body prevent cell breakdown and cause more efficient brain function. Just like sweet potatoes, carrots, melon and butternut squash, oranges in their rawest form have a high antioxidant effect. Processed juice from a carton can lose some of this power and alongside the added sugar, can mean a loss of beneficial properties.



RECIPES



THE BRAIN-BOOSTING BREAKFAST

Almond flour pancakes with coconut yoghurt, mixed berries and drizzled with Walden farm sauce.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 CUP ALMOND FLOUR
- ¼ CUP VANILLA WHEY PROTEIN (OPTIONAL)
- 1 CUP ALMOND MILK
- 2 EGGS

METHOD

Whisk the eggs in a jug or bowl. Add the milk and dry ingredients. Whisk until smooth. Pre-heat some coconut oil in a pan (quite hot temperature required). Ladle your mix into the centre of the frying pan.

It should be quite thick. Spread your pancake mix into a round shape with even thickness. It will not behave like a normal pancake. Flipping it takes more care. When both sides are cooked, serve with yoghurt and mixed berries.



TEMPTING THAI KICK STARTER

INGREDIENTS

- ½ AN ONION
- RED PEPPER
- YELLOW PEPPER
- GREEN PEPPER
- ASPARAGUS
- 1 RED CHILLI
- 1 TIN OF DRAINED TUNA 130G
- ½ TSP GROUND GINGER
- 1 TSP CHOPPED CORIANDER LEAF
- 1 TSP OF ROSE HARRISA PASTE
- A HANDFUL OF SPINACH
- 1/3 CUP COCONUT OIL (MELTED)

METHOD

Blend all the ingredients thoroughly in a food processor until mixed (this makes five fish cakes, depending on how big you want them). Take a good sized amount of the mix, roll in almond flour, place onto a baking tray press and mould into shape, and place in the fridge for 30 mins. Cook in a frying pan in a little coconut oil.

For the tempura veg, you'll need 1 ½ cups of flour, 1 egg, 2 tbsps almond milk, ½ cup of sparkling water (still will work as well). Mix all the ingredients in your food processor to make a batter. Ensure there are no lumps. Dip your sliced vegetables into the batter and immediately place into a pan of ground nut oil, which you have pre-heated on a medium heat on the hob. Cook in the oil until the batter is brown and crispy. Serve with the fishcakes for a tasty Thai meal.



CRANIAL-CARING CURRY

Chickpea and spinach curry

INGREDIENTS

- ADD TO A SLOW COOKER:
- 3 TINS OF CHICK PEAS
 - 1 TIN OF SPINACH PUREE
 - 1 TIN OF COCONUT MILK
 - 1 TIN OF TOMATOES
 - SOME CHOPPED OKRA
 - ½ RED PEPPER
 - ½ A LARGE ONION (CHOPPED)
 - UNPICKLED BABY BEETROOT
 - 4 CLOVES OF GARLIC (CHOPPED)
 - 1 RED CHILLI CHOPPED
 - 1 TSP GROUND GINGER
 - 1 TSP TURMERIC
 - ½ TSP GROUND CUMIN
 - 1 TSP GROUND CORIANDER
 - 1 TSP GARAM MASALA
 - ½ TSP GROUND CINNAMON

METHOD

Stir thoroughly. Leave to cook on a low level. It will freeze and keep.



DELICIOUSLY DECISIVE DESSERT

Dark chocolate and orange torte.

INGREDIENTS

- BASE:
- 100G ALMONDS, 100G WALNUTS, 6 FIGS AND 3 TBSPS COCONUT OIL (MELTED). BLEND IN A FOOD PROCESSOR AND PRESS FIRMLY INTO A CAKE TIN. PLACE IN THE FRIDGE TO COOL AND HARDEN.

- TOPPING:
- 3 TBSPS COCONUT OIL (MELTED), 2 BARS DARK CHOCOLATE (WARMED UNTIL SOFT), ½ CUP ORANGE JUICE (FRESHLY SQUEEZED), 3 VERY RIPE AVOCADOS (PEELED AND DE-STONED) AND 2 TBSPS HONEY.

METHOD

Mix these ingredients into a smooth paste in the food processor, spoon onto the chilled base and spread evenly. Place in the fridge to set. Serve when firm.



TURMERIC

Turmeric is one powerful ingredient. It has more than 400 uses, from protection against cell erosion to antioxidant effects against breakdown in cell membranes. A study in India showed older adults using it were 4.4 times less likely to develop Alzheimer's than the same US demographic.

Turmeric is a basic constituent of curry dishes. Research shows that individuals who occasionally eat curry, even less than once a month, still perform better on a standardized test compared to those who reported rarely or never eating curry.



FISH

Fish such as salmon, tuna and mackerel can provide the body with the most biologically available dietary omega 3's. Importantly, these fish are also the only biologically-sourced vitamin D which, when the body displays depleted level, has been linked to Alzheimer's, MS, Parkinson's, Epilepsy and other neurodegenerative dysfunctions.

Be careful of your fish resource, though! Wild and responsibly-sourced is preferential as some experts fear that high levels of metals in other sources can be as harmful to the brain and body, especially effecting brain function and memory.



CHICKPEAS

Chickpeas are a handy source of protein. They are high in vitamin B and folate, both responsible for the conversion of homocysteine, a by-product of cellular metabolism. It converts it into methionine, which is an amino acid.

There is awareness that high levels of homocysteine is responsible for blood vessel damage, but we are unable, as yet, to determine whether folate is the only causative decreasing factor. However, failing to have an adequate intake of vitamins and minerals is linked to high levels of homocysteine, which in turn is linked to Alzheimer's. In short, eat your chickpeas!



COFFEE

Coffee quite often comes in for some bad press, but a daily limit of decent beans is a sensible approach. There are 'buzz' bonuses, of course; coffee stimulates the central nervous system and has been shown to combat declining brain function, while the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* states that the positive effect of coffee is cumulative, and advocates a daily boost.

This does not mean you should drink too much. Instead, you should stick to the suggested daily recommendation (no more than 3 8oz cups per day) and you should reduce this if it affects your sleep. Sleep deprivation can be neurologically damaging.