



Nutrition & Mental Health



It is well known that eating nutritious foods may reduce your risk of chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Did you know that it may also benefit your mental health? Foods such as **vegetables, fruit, whole grains, fish, and beans** contain a mix of helpful nutrients including **fiber, vitamins** such as **folate** and **other B vitamins**, **minerals** such as **magnesium** and **omega-3 fats** that may help reduce symptoms of some mental health conditions. Healthful dietary patterns may even reduce the risk of depression.

What About Caffeine?

Moderate amounts of caffeine may have health benefits (such as reduced cognitive decline) in some people, but it can also aggravate symptoms of anxiety and panic disorder. The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends a daily maximum intake of 400mg caffeine per day, roughly equivalent to 4 small cups of coffee. If you have underlying mental health issues or seem to be sensitive to caffeine, you may wish to further limit caffeine intake.

For more information on nutrition, visit uhs.berkeley.edu/nutrition. We offer hybrid nutrition classes, recorded classes, an Ask the Dietitian service, recipes, and other resources.

Featured Recipes with Helpful Foods

Oatmeal Breakfast Bites

Yields about 18

Ingredients

- 2 very ripe bananas
- 1 cup applesauce
- 1 ½ cups rolled oats
- 1/3 cup raisins or other dried fruit
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- Oil for greasing pan

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a cookie sheet.
2. Mash the bananas in a medium bowl, then add remaining ingredients and mix well.
3. Drop 1–2 tablespoons of batter onto the cookie sheet. These “cookies” will not rise or spread, so shape them how you want.
4. Bake for 25–30 minutes, or until golden brown on top.



Mediterranean Salmon Salad

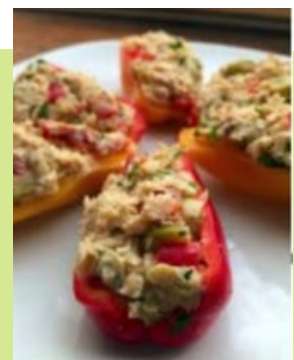
Serves 2

Ingredients

- 1 6-oz can salmon or tuna, drained
- 1/4 cup red bell pepper or other color, diced
- 1/4 cup jarred artichoke hearts, quartered
- 2 tablespoons olives, sliced
- 2 tablespoons sundried tomatoes, julienned
- 2–3 tablespoons hummus
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, minced
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients, starting with 2 tablespoons hummus. Add more if necessary to reach desired consistency.



Featured Recipes with Helpful Foods

Stewed Beans & Greens

Serves 3-4

Ingredients

- ½ yellow onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 bunch greens, such as collard greens or kale, chopped
- 1 15-ounce can white beans, rinsed and drained or 1 ¾ cup cooked white beans
- 1 tomato, chopped (1 cup)
- 1 ½ cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon miso
- salt and pepper to taste

Optional

- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika

Directions

1. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook until they start to brown, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, 30-60 seconds. Add greens, beans, tomatoes, broth, miso, and paprika if using.
2. Bring to a simmer, stir occasionally, and gently mash some of the beans as they soften, which will help thicken the liquid. Cook until the greens are tender, tomatoes have broken down, and the sauce has thickened, about 15 minutes. If the sauce is pretty watery and clear, mash more of the beans to thicken. Add salt and pepper to taste. For hearty greens like collards, you can add more water and cook it for longer if you would like them to be more tender.
3. Serve alone or with rice, another grain, cornbread, or other bread.



Grain Bowls

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 4 cups cooked quinoa
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, chopped
- 2 bell peppers, chopped
- 1 bunch broccoli, cut into small florets
- 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- olive oil
- garlic powder
- paprika
- chili powder
- salt to taste
- Arugula pesto and/or lemon tahini

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Toss each vegetable with olive oil and sprinkle all with salt and garlic powder. Toss sweet potatoes with chili powder. On separate baking sheets, roast each vegetable. It should take about 10 minutes for the bell peppers, 20 minutes for the broccoli, and 25-30 minutes for the sweet potato. The veggies are cooked once tender and lightly browned.
3. Toss chickpeas with paprika, garlic powder, and salt to taste.
4. Into 4 containers, divide the quinoa and chickpeas evenly. Add 2 of 3 veggies to each container and serve with sauce of choice.

Note: Try making this with other grains, proteins, vegetables, or sauces! The possibilities are endless.



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