



Celebrating World Mental Health Day

October 10th is World Mental Health Day. There is a growing body of evidence supporting a connection between the food we eat and the state of our mental health. In fact, the link between the gastrointestinal system (gut) and the brain is so strong, that the gut is often referred to as the “second brain”. Here are some tips on how to make the best of this relationship.

Key Food-Mood Connections

- A recent study that looked at data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey found that those with the highest levels of ultra-processed foods (highly processed foods with added salt, sugar, etc.) in their diets were more likely to report poorer mental health than those with greater intake of minimally processed foods and whole foods.
- Over 90% of serotonin, a hormone that helps mediate mood, regulate sleep and appetite, and inhibit pain, is produced in your gastrointestinal tract with the help of “good” bacteria that reside in the gut. Diets rich in whole foods and minimally processed foods support “good” bacteria, whereas diets with lots of highly processed food support “bad” bacteria growth, contributing to inflammation and poorer mental and physical health.



Food-Mood Superstars

When it comes to supporting mental and physical wellbeing, overall diet is what really counts. The Mediterranean diet (learn more here: [Mediterranean Eating Plan](#)) is an example of an eating plan that supports good health for mind and body and incorporates the foods highlighted below.

- **Leafy Green Vegetables:** are rich in folate, potassium, vitamin A and other B vitamins, which are nutrients identified in recent research to have significant impact on prevention and treatment of depressive disorders.
- **“Fatty” Fish:** are the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 intake is linked to better mental health. Examples of fatty fish include salmon, sardines, and mackerel. Plant-based sources include walnuts, flax, and chia seeds.
- **Berries:** are rich in polyphenols (a plant chemical). Recent research has shown an association between polyphenol consumption and lower depression risk, as well as a reduction in the severity of depressive symptoms.
- **Fiber-Rich Foods:** fruits and veggies, whole grains, beans, nuts –in other words whole plant foods, are all great sources of fiber and fiber feeds “good” gut bacteria, the bacteria that supports good mental and physical health.

Upcoming Events

Zoom Orientation, Food Safety & Nutrition

October 12th, 10:00 am--12:00 pm

Please contact
 Sierra Puwalski *or* Jennifer Aebly
 at
 631-873-4775 to register.



Senior (60+) Food Distributions

Please call for income eligibility requirements at: 631-873-4775.

When: Tuesdays: 2:00 pm-4:00 pm
 and Fridays: 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

***Please Note:** No Distributions the last week of each month

Where: Island Harvest Food Bank
 126 Spagnoli Rd., Melville





NUTRITION RESOURCE CENTER

Eating for Better Mental Health

For an in-depth, scientific discussion of the connection between food, nutrition, and mental health, visit the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) site and watch “Eating for Better Mental Health”, featuring Dr. Uma Naidoo, a nutritional psychiatrist and researcher.

[NAMI](#)



Nutrition & Anxiety

This Mayo Clinic article provides information and diet tips that may help people cope better with anxiety.

[Nutrition & Anxiety Disorder](#)

The Power of Mindfulness

When combined with sound nutrition, physical activity and adequate sleep, mindfulness is an essential tool for good physical and mental health. Learn more here:

[Mindfulness](#)



Quick & Easy Chicken, Kale & White Bean Soup



Ingredients (6 servings)

- 1.5 Tbsp olive oil (or other vegetable oil)
- 1 cup onion, finely diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 8 cups low sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 15-oz can white beans, rinsed and drained (or 2 cup cooked dry beans)
- 2 cups cooked shredded chicken (or 3 5-oz cans chicken, rinsed and drained or make it vegetarian by replacing chicken with extra beans--about 1 ½ cups)
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika (optional)
- Black pepper and salt (optional) to taste
- 3 cups chopped kale (or other hardy greens)

Directions

1. In a large pot, heat oil, then add onion.
2. Sauté for 5-6 minutes or until onion is soft and translucent, stir occasionally. Then add garlic and sauté 2-3 minutes more, take care not to burn.
3. Add broth, beans, sweet potatoes, chicken and bring to a simmer. Cook for about 15 minutes, until sweet potatoes are fork tender.
4. Taste and season with paprika, salt (optional) and pepper.
5. In the last 5 minutes of cooking, add the kale, cover, and cook until kale softens and wilts.
6. Serve hot with your favorite whole grain bread.

Simple Garlic Bread

Ingredients:

- whole grain bread or roll
- garlic
- olive oil
- oregano or parsley



Directions: lightly toast bread, set aside to cool, then slice garlic clove in half and rub cut side over bread, drizzle on olive oil, sprinkle with oregano and/or parsley and serve with your favorite soup or stew.