

BRAIN FRIENDLY RECIPES

Dementia Action Week 2022

**LEMON, MINT & PECAN CRUSTED SALMON WITH
ROASTED SQUASH RATATOUILLE AND BASIL AIOLI**



Ingredients

- 3 salmon fillets
- 1 onion
- ½ head of broccoli
- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 medium carrot
- 350g (1/3 large butternut squash)
- 40g pecans
- pinch caster sugar
- pinch sea salt
- pinch ground black pepper
- ½ tbsp flour (Plain or Self Raising)
- 4 sprigs of mint
- 6 sprigs basil
- pinch of parsley
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2/3 tbsp cold pressed rapeseed oil
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 lemon
- baby corn (4)
- 1 tin (400g) chopped tomatoes
- 1 tsp supermarket 'Italian' herb mix – or dried oregano & dried basil
- 1 egg

This recipe is inspired by the Mediterranean, DASH and MIND diets, which have been shown to reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia later in life from anywhere between 20% and 50%. You can find out more about these diets [here](#)*

If you have a go at cooking this meal please let us know how you get on, tell us if you've switched up any ingredients, added your own flourishes or if you have any of your own brain friendly recipe ideas - Tweet us @dementiaunited using the hashtag #DAWHealthyMind, or email us gmhscp.dementiaunited@nhs.net>

*<https://brain.health/articles/mediterranean-dash-and-mind-diets-a-beginners-guide/>

BRAIN FOOD

There is no one food which can promise a healthy brain, but most scientists agree that a Mediterranean diet is the best for keeping your brain healthy.

That's a diet where there are plenty of fruit, vegetables, oily fish, whole grains, nuts, olive oil and a moderate amount of red wine/dark chocolate, tea and coffee. Whilst they also suggest that we cut down on red meat, white rice, bread, sugars, full fat dairy and salt.

Interestingly, the research also shows that good bacteria in our guts can help keep our brains sharp, so fermented foods (for example pickled vegetables and pro-biotic yogurt); and foods which encourage the growth of good bacteria such as banana, ginger, broccoli and dark chocolate may help keep our brains working at their best.

To provide a bit of tasty inspiration, we've teamed up with Tom from MudBugs restaurant mudbugs.co.uk to create four brain-friendly recipes based on the Mediterranean diet to tickle your tastebuds.



LEMON, MINT & PECAN CRUSTED SALMON WITH ROASTED SQUASH RATATOUILLE AND BASIL AIOLI

Method

***Note:** Don't pre-heat your oven.

1. **Peel and dice the carrot, onion and pepper** and add to a frying pan with a little rapeseed oil. Cook on medium heat with a pinch of sea salt, pepper and a teaspoon of Italian herb mix.
2. **Once softened take off the heat and** put half the mix into a lidded saucepan, add the tin of chopped tomatoes & sliced garlic clove and gently cook until thickened slightly. Roughly chop a few basil leaves and a little parsley, add to the pan and blitz until smooth.

Chef's note on Tomatoes: *If you can, it's worth spending a bit extra on good quality chopped tomatoes. Look for a brand with D.O.P. on the tin – this is the sign to show it's a protected variety from Italy which must pass certain standard tests and be grown in a particular region. These are so good you can eat them from the tin with a spoon, you can also make a pizza/pasta sauce simply by whisking it cold with a little olive oil and your favourite chopped fresh herbs. Your standard tinned tomatoes (even the ones with fancier packaging) tend to be unripe leftovers from the farm that weren't good enough to sell fresh. If you do use a standard tinned tomato, you may want to add a dash of red wine vinegar, a little sugar and cook them down on a low heat for quite a while to thicken.*



3. **Roast your veg.** Put the oven on 170 fan/180 conventional. Chop your butternut squash (about 1/3 of a large one) into thumbnail sized cubes and place in an oven dish. Give them a little splash of cold pressed rapeseed oil, a pinch of sea salt and pop them in the oven. **Roast for about 20 mins**, they should be going in when the oven is still warming up (Mine was at 100° when I got them in).

After 20 minutes the butternut squash should have some nice colour and be mostly cooked. Add ½ a head of broccoli cut into florets and halved, and a few chopped baby corns. Here you can add anything you like really – we’re going to roast this veg in an oven that is now up to temperature, and we’re looking for a little char for flavour. Cauliflower works well cooked this way, you could add mangetout, French beans even some tinned pulses like Cannellini or Borlotti. **Cook for an additional 10-15 mins keeping an eye on the char.**

4. Put your roasted veg, the half of the diced fried veg we saved, and your sauce all together in whichever pan they’ll all fit in best. Give it all a nice mix, mine came out very thick and I added a couple glugs of extra virgin olive oil and a touch more sea salt - **You have Ratatouille!**
5. **Make the Salmon Crust.** Add 40g pecans, a pinch of caster sugar, pinch of sea salt and 4 sprigs worth of picked mint leaves to a container. Blitz until it’s starting to resemble breadcrumbs. If you go too far and end up with peanut butter consistency – just add a bit of flour (Around ¾ tbsp) and break apart with a fork. Now add the juice of ½ a lemon, and a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil. It should all stick together nicely (**don’t worry if you still have some chunks of pecan we are going for a ‘rustic’ crust**). Place your Salmon fillets in an oven dish. If you like the skin, then pat it dry with paper towel and dust it with a little table-salt. Place it in the dish skin down on some baking parchment. If you don’t want the skin, put the fillets straight in the dish, the skin should stick, and the salmon should lift off after cooking. **Fork your crust mix on top of the fillets.** Knock your oven **down to 165 fan / 175 conventional.** Cooking times will vary quite a bit depending on the thickness of your cut. I bought thinner supermarket-brand fillets and they cooked in about 6 minutes. **6-8 minutes is a good estimate** – The best way to check whether it’s done is to take the dish out and gently pinch the fillet in the middle (Or at its thickest part). The flesh should ‘flake’ and the flakes should start to easily separate from each other. If it’s firm or it doesn’t easily flake it needs a bit longer.
6. **Make a simple Aioli.** Separate 1 egg yolk into a container, add a tablespoon of water, ½ a lemon of juice, pinch of caster sugar, 1 tsp of Dijon mustard and garlic (see chef’s notes below r.e. amount). Start blitzing the mix, try and get it smooth but don’t worry if there are a couple bits you can’t get to with the hand blitzer. Keep blitzing and gradually drizzle in some extra virgin olive oil. You may need 100-300ml depending on the quality of oil. You will probably see it thicken almost immediately. Once you have a nice thickness add loads of picked basil leaves – about 6 sprigs worth. Get it blitzed up again until smooth. If you end up too thin go back in with a little oil, too thick add a bit

more water (use a spoon to add it, as it will thin out quite quickly). Now have a taste, you may well find the mix too bitter, you can add a little caster sugar or some honey and whisk it in. That's it, no need to cook the egg yolk out*

Chef's note on garlic: *Garlic in the aioli is really up to taste – aioli is normally very strongly garlic flavoured. If you're a garlic lover go in with a half or ¾ clove roughly chopped. If you're not a fan of the pungency add a couple of thin slices – or, for a twist, bake your garlic first. Garlic releases the molecule that causes the pungency in taste and aroma in response to being cut when raw (more cuts = more pungency). If you bake it before you use it, it loses almost all pungency and becomes almost sweet and fragrant, you can also change the taste by crushing instead of cutting. I've even seen some chefs turn a chef's blade sideways and bash it against the clove, crushing it and then drawing the knife against it at a 45 degree angle until it's almost paste like. Again, a completely different taste (It's amazing stuff). If you want to go for a bake, pop a whole bulb unpeeled in the oven at about 160 for around 25 mins. Give the bulb a squeeze, the cloves should be all soft inside. Cut the flat root part off with a sharp knife and pinch the whole thing between your thumb and first finger. You should eject some delicious garlic paste – careful as its raging hot just out the oven.*

7. Get your plate and be a little stylish with the delicious aioli you've just created. Put a dollop near the plate edge and use the bottom of a tablespoon to smear it across the plate, put your salmon over the top at a jaunty angle and spoon a nice dollop of your ratatouille where they meet.

* **Note:** *Lion stamped eggs (all UK eggs) are safe to eat raw – the fear of it is a leftover from back in the 70's when we had an issue with the supply.*