

BRAIN FRIENDLY RECIPES

Dementia Action Week 2022

**SOUTH INDIAN LENTIL DAAL WITH ROASTED
SWEET POTATO & SEASONED BASMATI**



Ingredients

- 1 medium red onion
- 3 medium sweet potatoes
- 2 cups brown basmati rice
- 2 red chilli
- 1 thumb sized piece of root ginger
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1/2 a mango
- 1/2 a pineapple
- 4 lime leaves (or one lime)
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- Pinch black pepper
- Sea salt
- 2 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp methi seed (fenugreek seeds)
- 2 tsp tamarind paste
- 1 can reduced fat coconut milk
- 1 cup of red lentils
- 2 tbsp Italian seasoning blend
- 2 tbsp peanuts
- Few sprigs fresh coriander
- Cold pressed rapeseed oil
- Extra virgin olive oil

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.



SOUTH INDIAN LENTIL DAAL WITH ROASTED SWEET POTATO & SEASONED BASMATI

Method

1. **Start by slicing one medium onion**, fry it with a pinch of sea salt and a good few glugs of cold pressed rapeseed oil. Keep in on a medium high heat until it's nicely softened and starting to colour a little bit – if you're getting black bits turn the heat down.
2. **Turn the heat down to low** add 2 red chilli's sliced and de-seeded, peeled and sliced ginger, 3 sliced or crushed cloves of garlic, ½ a mango peeled and sliced, ½ a pineapple peeled and chopped.
3. **Add the herbs and spices**, 4 lime leaves (If you can't get them, you can substitute a zested + juiced lime), 2 tsp coriander powder, 1 tsp turmeric, pinch of black pepper, pinch of sea salt, 1 tsp methi fenugreek seeds). **Keep this mixture moving about the pan for about 5 minutes.**
4. **Add the tin of coconut milk** and simmer for another 5 minutes. Move to a separate bowl and blend until smooth. Move it back to the pan, still on a very low heat. It will be fairly watery (not to worry we are going to use this to cook the lentils)
5. **Add the tamarind paste.** I used a supermarket paste which was quite liquid and weak. It's possible to get vacuum packed tamarind at the world food section sometimes – this and more authentic brands of the paste will be far more potent. It's easy to ruin the dish at this stage as the Tamarind can turn the whole lot sour. **Add a little at a time and taste as you go.** I found that I needed to add a bit more sea salt too at this stage to bring out the other flavours against the power of the Tamarind.
6. **Once you are happy with the flavour, add the lentils.** I measured the lentils by washing out the coconut milk tin and filling it halfway with lentils. They need to be thoroughly rinsed in cold water before they go in. **Once in, keep on the low heat for 15 mins.** The lentils should still have some bite.
7. **Take the mixture off the heat**, the lentils will probably take a bit more cooking, but they quickly turn into a mushy paste – we'd really like to avoid this. **Stop the process when they still have a little bite to them and your good for re-heating another time** (curry is always better the second time)



8. **Peel and chop your sweet potato into cubes**, drizzle on a little cold pressed rapeseed oil add a pinch of sea salt and pop them into the oven (**180/170 fan for about 15 mins**). Once they are cooked pop them in with the rest of the sauce.
9. **Get the 2 cups of brown basmati rice in a pan** and boil the kettle. Add boiling water until the **water is about twice the volume of the rice**. Keep it on a medium simmer and check the packet as the cooking times vary but mine was 20 minutes. **The pan should just be running dry by the time the rice is cooked**
10. Season the rice! Don't settle for plain rice – it really gives the whole dish a lift if you put a little effort into those grains.

***Chef's note:** For seasoning rice, any savoury spice blend paired with a little salt and some good extra virgin olive will work. At my restaurant we use a savoury blend with about 15 ingredients, with onion & garlic powder as the base with lots of other bits to keep it interesting. Aleppo the Turkish flaked paprika variety is fantastic as a general savoury enhancer.*

10. **Rice seasoning continued:** For this recipe I opted for some common ingredients for seasoning. I used some peanuts I had left over from another recipe and prepared them in a dry pan on a low heat until they were nicely brown all over, then crushed them with the bottom of a bowl. I paired the cooked peanuts with the old faithful "Italian" herb mix, a pinch of sea salt and a little drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. All that and a little pinch of chopped fresh coriander went into the rice.
11. **Warm the curry up and serve on a bed of rice** with a little pinch of fresh coriander on top if, like me, you feel the need to garnish

