

BRAIN FRIENDLY RECIPES

Dementia Action Week 2022

SPRING GREENS & SMOKED HERRING PASTA BAKE



Ingredients

- 1/2 a leek
- 5 tender stem broccolis
- 5 asparagus stalks
- 1 medium onion
- 2 handfuls chopped kale
- 1 garlic clove
- 1/3 tbsp flour (any)
- Pinch of sea salt
- Table salt
- Pinch of black pepper
- 240g brown pasta
- 70g peanuts
- 20g mixed seeds
- 3 heaped tbsp crème fraiche
- A good glug of extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp cold pressed rapeseed oil
- 4 smoked herring or mackerel fillets
- 1 lemon
- A few sprigs of curly parsley
- 1 tsp dried dill

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.



SPRING GREENS & SMOKED HERRING PASTA BAKE

Method

1. Pre-Heat oven to 170 Fan / 180 Conventional
2. **Make the crumble top first:** Put the peanuts and seed mix with a little sea salt in a dry frying pan on high heat. **Keep the mix moving until its toasts off nicely** to a light brown colour. If you start to see black bits take the pan off the heat and keep the mix moving for a bit until the colour evens out. Tip the mix into a heat proof container with high sides and blitz. If you don't have a hand blender you can achieve a similar effect by wrapping the mix in foil or baking parchment and then a tea towel and bashing it with a rolling pin. Once you have a crumb consistency add about $\frac{3}{4}$ tablespoon of flour and about a half tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil. **Mix it up with a spoon and set aside.**
3. **Pick the leaves from a few sprigs of parsley and roughly chop.** Set that aside for later also.
4. **Unpack your smoked fish.** Flip each fillet upside down and run a knife over the skin with a little pressure. This should easily remove the skin. You will probably remove the bloodline (grey flesh) from the fish too. This is fine either way. It tastes fine but some people don't like the colour. **Keep this aside for now.**
5. **Chop the veg.** If you were lucky enough to get curly kale stalks, the best way to prep it is to grip the stalk at its thickest bit and then rip off the other end from the end of the stalk outwards. It should now be easy to rip the remaining kale leaf off, down the length of either side of the stalk. You can discard the stalk. Roll the leaves up into a sausage and slice into thin circle strips. If you are stuck with supermarket machine cut kale it will likely have little pieces of stalk left on. These are fine to eat.
5. **Slice the rest of your veg roughly** at about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch lengths (at a jaunty angle of course). That's 5 asparagus stalks (If it's just the tips use the whole thing, if it included the stalks take about a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch off the bottom where it starts to go white in colour), 5 tender stem broccoli stalks and half a leek. With the leek, cut off the root and a bit off the top where the green leaf is really thick. Slice it in half down the length so you can rinse off any soil



trapped in the leaves.

6. **Dice your onion.** Chop the top end off to leave a flat tip. Leave the root end in place and slice in half through the root. Peel the outer skin off and slice almost up to the root in strips, **turn around and slice through the strips to dice.**
7. **Slice, dice or smash your garlic clove in a press,** add it and the onion to a frying pan. Add a pinch of sea salt, a tsp of dried dill, a little black pepper and a glug of cold pressed rapeseed oil. Fry on medium heat until golden brown and set aside.
8. **Get a good couple litres of water on a rolling boil** and add some table salt. Pasta water should be salted for taste. As the pasta absorbs a lot of water but not that much salt, there needs to be enough salt in the water so that you can taste it in the water. Almost all of it drains off so don't be scared to trust your taste buds. Going off the packet instructions (my fusilli took 9 minutes to cook) **add your pasta and set a timer for 3 minutes less than suggested.** Once your timer goes, take the pan off the heat, and add all your chopped veggies. Now set a timer for 5 minutes. After this you should have achieved cooked pasta and lightly blanched veg. Check your pasta to make sure it's cooked and drain the pan.
9. **Add 3 heaped tablespoons of low-fat crème fraiche.** Now add your onion, chopped parsley and rip up your fish into the mix with your hands. Give it all a good mix with a spoon and turn it out into your oven proof dish.
10. **Top it with the nut crumble mix.** Cut some lemon slices and put them on top too (de-pith and de-seed the sections first)
11. **Put it into the oven for about 10 minutes** (or until the crumble has browned and gets all crispy)
12. Step 10. Feed to a bemused but adorable 2-year-old.

