



# Brain Food on a Budget

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# Seafood

Sardines and anchovies are some of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet and, luckily, are easy on the wallet. A good trick is buying canned wild salmon – awesome for salmon salad or salmon burgers. Canned tuna is also a great source of protein, omega 3 fatty acids and B vitamins. Worried about higher mercury levels? Pick Skipjack or American or Canadian Albacore tuna that's lowest in Mercury and limit tuna to a few times per week. Another top recommendation is the bivalves: mussels, clams, and oysters. Get them fresh or canned.

Another great tip is to buy frozen fish. Almost all fish is frozen when it is caught anyway (Once upon a time I mistakenly thought that fresh fish was always straight from the sea!). Frozen is great as it takes away the pressure of having to cook fish right away... and I like knowing I've got a freezer full of brain nutrients in case I am in a pinch.

# Incorporate legumes

Beans and lentils should be a foundational food category for you. Legumes are incredibly filling, delicious, nutrient dense, and rich in fiber that supports the “good bugs” in our gut. The best value is buying dried beans and lentils in bulk.

Special mention of the lentil – because lentils are life changing in my opinion. Unlike beans, lentils don't require soaking, and they cook in under 40 minutes and require very little attention. Plus, they are packed with vitamin B9, aka folate. Just rinse before using. There is also tremendous variety within the lentil family – green, yellow, red,



black and brown. All boasting different nutrients and flavors. Make into soups, salads, stews or burgers.

Beans are all delicious and nutritious, and you can eat the entire rainbow with beans alone. At Walmart, 32 oz of great northern beans is just over \$3.00. 32 ounces is 26 servings! That's less than 15 cents per serving! Canned beans may take less time, but the price difference is huge, and once you get the hang of it, cooking beans from scratch doesn't feel so intimidating.

## Buy frozen fruits and vegetables

A lot of people think they should shy away from frozen fruits and veggies, but the truth is that a lot of frozen produce has more nutrients than what we find on our shelves. Frozen produce is harvested and frozen immediately, while most other produce is shipped across the country (or shipped from abroad) and spends days, and even weeks, traveling and sitting on grocery store shelves. Sure, frozen veggies won't work well in a salad, but they're great in soups, stews, stir-frys and other meals.

Should they be organic? Ideally, yes. But, organic veggies are more costly. That's why we recommend eating in season, maxing out the value at your Farmer's Market, and knowing which veggies are most important to buy organic (like leafy greens). I use [The Environmental Working Group's list of the "dirty dozen"](#) to know which vegetables and fruits are most laden with pesticides and where to focus on organic.



# Buy in bulk if you can!

Buying in bulk is always less expensive. If you can fit it into your budget, it's a great way to save and prepare for the month ahead.

Gluten-free grains like oatmeal and brown rice, which are affordable and brain healthy staples, are easy to buy in bulk. You can experiment with other whole grains like millet, buckwheat, and amaranth. Legumes like beans and lentils are also often available in bulk bins with even better prices than listed above.

You can also buy spices from bulk bins. The price per ounce may not vary tremendously, but you can buy whatever quantity you like. This will keep your spices fresher, you won't need to use as much, and you won't need to toss old tasteless spices.

Thrive Market is a great option for pantry staples and buying in bulk. If you sign up using [this link](#) you'll receive 25% off your first order with them.

In some areas, it's also possible to buy meat in bulk. You can even purchase a meat share directly from a farmer. Depending on how many people you feed each day, it may make sense to go in with a friend or another family nearby. Just make sure you have someplace to store it. A chest freezer works quite nicely. I bought a  $\frac{1}{4}$  cow share of grass-fed beef (we grew the grass on our farm) from my neighbor Farmer Tim. For \$790, we got over 200lbs of meat custom cut to our liking.

Butcherbox is a great option for buying meat in bulk. Use [this link](#) here to save on your first Butcherbox delivery.



# Shop in season

Eating in season is beneficial for a number of reasons; it ensures diversity in your diet, the nutrient content of freshly picked produce can't be beat, you get to know folks in your community and the people who grow your food, you support the local economy and often small businesses, and you can save money.

Farmers markets often partner with city agencies to offer incentives to buy. In NYC, many organizations give out “health bucks”, which are \$2 coupons that can be used to buy produce at the farmers market. You can also use food stamps at many Farmers’ Markets. In some states, shoppers are also given an extra \$3 for every \$5 spent using Food Stamps.

And, if these aren't enough reasons to shop at the market, you can also get great deals, especially at the end of the day. Bags of apples, potatoes, tomatoes, zucchini and other produce can be even more affordable than hand picking your own.

Here are a few recipes that I love making with my family. They're simple, cost-effective, and delicious brain-healthy recipes.



# Recipes

## Caldo Verde

Serves 4; You'll need a stove.

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, roughly chopped or garlic powder
- 5 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 8 ounces Yukon Gold potatoes, diced into 1-inch pieces
- 1 (15 ounce) can chickpeas, drained
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt
- 1 large bunch kale (about 1 lb) ribs removed, thinly sliced
- 12 ounces pre cooked mild Italian chicken sausage, sliced ¼ inch thick on a slight bias
- Juice 1 large lemon (about 3 tablespoons)
- Black pepper

Warm the olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, until softened. Add the garlic and cook for an additional 1 minute. Stir in the chicken broth, potatoes, chickpeas, bay leaf, and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and cook for 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are fork-tender. Remove the bay leaf, then use an immersion blender to blend the soup until smooth. Raise the heat to medium, then stir in the kale and chicken sausage and continue cooking for 3 to 5 minutes, until the kale is wilted but still slightly crunchy. Remove from heat. Stir in the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper.

# Recipes

## Coconut Ginger Lentil Soup

Serves 4; You'll need a stove.

- 1 tbsp coconut oil
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced (frozen)
- 1 medium yellow bell pepper, diced (frozen)
- 1 cup dried red lentils
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 (2 inch) piece ginger, peeled and grated
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 3 cups frozen spinach (one bunch of frozen spinach)
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 3 cups chicken broth, bone broth or water
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes
- 1 (13.5 oz) can unsweetened coconut milk
- Kosher salt

*We make a family favorite lentil soup that is super simple. Here is a fancier option for when you want to really spice things up in the kitchen!*



Warm the coconut oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Add the bell pepper and onion and cook until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Add the lentils, garlic, ginger, turmeric, paprika, and red pepper flakes and cook for an additional 1 minute. Stir in the broth, tomatoes, coconut milk, and 1 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 20 to 25 minutes, until the lentils are tender. Stir in the spinach and basil and cook until wilted. Taste and season with additional salt if needed. Stir in the lemon juice just before serving.

# Recipes

## Lentil Shepherd Pie

Serves 6; You'll need a stove and an oven.

- ½ cup uncooked lentils
- 3 pounds sweet potatoes (about 3 large potatoes), peeled and quartered
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 ½ cups)
- One 5-ounce container mushrooms, such as cremini, button, or shiitake, chopped
- 1 pound grass-fed ground beef
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or other seasoning of choice
- ⅔ cup buttermilk or whole milk, preferably from grass-fed cows
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon baking powder

Cook the lentils according to the package instructions and set aside. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Put the potatoes in a medium pot, cover with at least one inch of cold water, and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are tender, 12 to 15 minutes. While the potatoes are cooking, warm the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and mushrooms and cook until tender, 5 to 6 minutes. Push the vegetables to the side and add the beef. Cook the beef for 2 to 3 minutes without moving to allow the beef to brown. Continue to cook, breaking up the meat, for about 2 minutes more. Stir in the Worcestershire sauce, pepper, and reserved lentils. Transfer the meat mixture to a 7 x 11-inch baking dish. Once the potatoes are fork-tender, drain them and transfer them to a food processor along with the buttermilk and the garlic powder. Process until smooth. Sprinkle the baking powder over the mixture and process again to incorporate. Using a spatula, spoon the potato mixture over the top of the meat mixture in the baking dish. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes until the shepherd's pie is bubbling hot and the potato topping is golden. Cool 5 minutes before serving.



# Recipes

## Honey Soy Wild Salmon Burger

Serves 4; You'll need a stove.

- 2 large eggs
- 3 (5 oz) cans wild salmon, drained
- ½ cup panko breadcrumbs
- 2 green onions
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 3 garlic cloves
- Juice of 1 large lime (about 3 tbsp)
- 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cups cooked brown rice or other grain (tip: buy rice in bulk)

Whisk the eggs in a large bowl. Add the salmon and use a fork to crush it up until no large chunks remain. Add the panko, green onions, ginger, garlic, lime juice, and soy sauce and mix to combine. Form four 1/2-inch-thick patties. Refrigerate if not cooking right away. Warm the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the patties until golden brown all over, about 4 minutes per side. Spread mayonnaise all over the cut sides of the burger bun. Add a salmon patty to each bun, then top with avocado and lettuce. Place the top bun on top and serve.

# Recipes

## Brainbow Kimchi Fried Rice

Serves 4; You'll need a stovetop.

- ⅓ cup low-sodium soy sauce
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp sriracha
- 2 tbsp unsweetened creamy peanut butter
- 3 tbsp water, divided
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ¼ cups frozen red bell pepper
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 8 oz frozen spinach (or another green)
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, grated or minced
- 3 cups cooked brown rice (tip: preferably day old, buy rice in bulk)
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup kimchi, chopped

Whisk together the soy sauce, vinegar, sriracha, peanut butter, 2 tablespoons of water, and honey in a small bowl. Set aside. Warm the olive oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the bell pepper, carrot, spinach, onion, and 1 tablespoon water and cook, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, for 4 to 5 minutes, until almost tender. Stir in the garlic and ginger and cook for another 30 seconds. Add the rice, greens, and peanut sauce and stir until everything is coated in the sauce and the greens are wilted. Push the rice to the side to create a clearing in the skillet. Crack the eggs into the skillet and use the wooden spoon to scramble them rapidly. When the eggs are cooked, stir them into the rice. Add the kimchi last to best preserve the live probiotic bacteria. Serve immediately.

# Shopping List

## As Needed List (*likely once a month*)

- Extra virgin olive oil \$5-\$15
- Garlic powder \$3
- Brown rice (in bulk for multiple recipes a week) \$2-\$4
- Lemon or organic, not from concentrate juice (once a month list!) - \$6.50
- Red lentils \$2-\$5
- Chickpeas \$1-\$4
- Baking powder \$2
- Panko breadcrumbs \$1.50-\$2
- Rice wine vinegar \$1-3
- Sriracha \$2-\$3
- 1 tbsp coconut oil \$6-\$10
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric \$10
- 2 tbsp unsweetened creamy peanut butter \$3-\$5
- 2 tbsp honey \$3-5
- ½ cup kimchi, chopped \$4-\$10

**TOTAL: \$52-\$88**

# Shopping List

## Weekly List

- 3 cans wild salmon \$6-10
- Garlic bulbs \$1-3
- Carton of eggs \$3-4
- Frozen spinach \$2
- Frozen peppers \$2.30-\$4.50
- Carrots \$1
- Green onion \$.50-\$1.50
- Coconut cream or milk \$2-3
- Yellow onion \$.50-\$1
- Low sodium soy sauce \$3-5
- Mushrooms \$2
- Grass fed beef \$6-8
- Whole milk \$2.50
- Sweet potatoes \$3-4
- Worcestershire sauce \$4
- Chicken broth 5 cups \$.75-\$2
- 8 ounces Yukon Gold potatoes, diced into 1-inch pieces \$2-4
- 1 bay leaf \$2-3
- 1 large bunch kale (about 1 lb) ribs removed, thinly sliced \$2-4
- 12 ounces pre cooked mild Italian chicken sausage \$3.50-\$5
- 2 pieces of ginger \$1-\$2
- 1 (14.5 oz) can diced tomatoes \$.75-\$2
- 1 large lime \$.50-\$1
- 3 (5 oz) cans wild salmon \$6-\$8

**TOTAL: \$57-87**

# A Note From Dr. Ramsey



I hope these tips and recipes show you how eating for brain health can be easy and affordable. If you're interested in learning more about how to eat for better mental health, make sure to follow me on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and subscribe to my [YouTube](#) channel.