

Brain Health Kitchen

Fighting Alzheimer's with Food

I'm Annie Fenn, an OB/GYN physician dedicated to fighting Alzheimer's through food. After 20 years practicing medicine, I realized that helping people change what they eat was just as effective at improving health as prescribing pills or procedures. So, I traded my stethoscope for an apron, honed my culinary skills, and founded Brain Health Kitchen, evidence-based cooking classes and an online resource focused on how and what to eat to resist cognitive decline. You can find over 100 of my original recipes plus useful tips and brain-healthy techniques for eating delicious food that's good for your brain, too.



Why brain health? Why now?

- Alzheimer's starts 20 to 30 years before the first memory lapse.
- A brain-healthy lifestyle (think plenty of exercise, high quality sleep, and a brain-healthy dietary pattern) has been proven to reduce Alzheimer's risk by 60% and as much as 30% in those with a genetic mutation for the disease.
- Following a brain-healthy diet not only helps you fend off cognitive decline, it can help quell the inflammation linked to anxiety and depression.

My top tips for keeping your brain healthy:

1. **Eat these 5 foods every day:** berries, leafy greens, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts.
2. **My 4F's of Brain Healthy Food**—Foods should have at least 2 of the following:
 - a. **Brain-friendly Fats**—mostly from monounsaturated and omega-3s
 - b. **Flavonoids**—powerful nutrients that come from plants pigments
 - c. **Fiber**—to lower cholesterol, stabilize blood sugar, and support a diverse gut microbiome
 - d. **Fit**—the food fits realistically into your life, you enjoy it, it's convenient, and/or it connects you with your heritage, community, and the people who grew or raised the food
3. **Temperature matters when cooking with oil:** Extra-virgin olive oil possesses delicate brain-healthy polyphenols and monounsaturated fats that break down if overheated. Above 375°F, use avocado or pecan oil. Below that, choose extra-virgin olive oil.
4. **Reduce advanced glycation end product (AGE) formation:** AGES are an inflammatory substance that harms brain cells. Avoid them by using gentle cooking techniques: braise, steam, slow cook, slow roast, and grill over indirect heat.
5. **Avoid drinks with added sugar.** Reach for whole food sweeteners when cooking: dates, maple syrup, honey, fruit purees.



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The Brain Health Kitchen Shopping List

Tack this onto your fridge or pull it up on your phone while shopping to remind you of the important foods for preventing Alzheimer's.

The BHK Food Guidelines are based on the MIND diet study (Morris et al, *Journal of Alzheimer's and Dementia*, 2015), Blue Zones data, the Green MED diet study, more than 35 studies of the Mediterranean diet, and the latest science of preventing Alzheimer's. This list is not exhaustive, but should help make it easy to start filling your plate with the brain-friendliest foods.

***If you can, buy organic for the ingredients marked with an asterisk.**

Berries

1 or more ½-cup portion
most days

- ☐ blueberries*
- ☐ wild blueberries*
- ☐ strawberries*
- ☐ blackberries*
- ☐ cranberries
- ☐ cherries*
- ☐ raspberries*
- ☐ currants
- ☐ grapes*

Vegetables

3 cups (raw) or 1½ cups
(cooked) or more daily

- ☐ carrots
- ☐ broccoli
- ☐ cauliflower
- ☐ cabbage
- ☐ Brussels sprouts
- ☐ radishes
- ☐ peas
- ☐ sweet potatoes
- ☐ avocado

Leafy Greens

2 cups (raw) or 1 cup
(cooked) or more daily

- ☐ kale*
- ☐ Swiss chard*
- ☐ spinach*
- ☐ arugula*
- ☐ mustard greens
- ☐ dandelion greens
- ☐ lettuces* (especially darker greens)
- ☐ any leafy herbs (like mint, basil, cilantro, and parsley)

Whole Grains

3 ½-cup servings (cooked)
per day

- ☐ farro
- ☐ brown rice

- ☐ black (forbidden rice)
- ☐ wild rice
- ☐ whole-grain pasta
- ☐ oats*
- ☐ quinoa
- ☐ freekeh
- ☐ barley

Beans and Legumes

4 ½-cup (cooked) servings
per week

- ☐ chickpeas
- ☐ lentils
- ☐ black
- ☐ cannellini
- ☐ split peas
- ☐ soy
- ☐ edamame
- ☐ miso paste
- ☐ tofu*

Nuts and Seeds

5 ¼-cup servings per week

- ☐ almonds
- ☐ cashews
- ☐ pistachios
- ☐ walnuts
- ☐ Brazil nuts
- ☐ pecans
- ☐ hazelnuts
- ☐ any seeds (such as sunflower, flax, hemp, pumpkin)

Fish and Seafood, not fried

1 or more 3-ounce servings
per week

- ☐ wild-caught salmon
- ☐ sardines
- ☐ anchovies
- ☐ mackerel
- ☐ herring
- ☐ cod
- ☐ trout

- ☐ shellfish: shrimp, scallops, oysters, clams, mussels

Cooking Oils

- ☐ extra-virgin olive oil (your primary oil)
- ☐ avocado oil (for high-heat)
- ☐ nut oils (pecan, walnut, hazelnut, etc)

Poultry and Meat

Limit poultry and meat to up to four 3-ounce servings weekly

→ *Look for certified organic or natural (aka, antibiotic- and hormone-free) products raised on farms, not factories*

Poultry: not fried

Meat: Look for grass-fed or mostly grass-fed meats and wild game

Miscellaneous

- ☐ Try to eat 30 different plant foods every week.
- ☐ Fermented food: 1 or more per day
- ☐ Dark chocolate (>65% cacao): 1 ounce per day
- ☐ Coffee (without dairy, artificial sweeteners, or sugar added): up to 3 cups per day
- ☐ Mushrooms: at least two ½ -cup servings each week
- ☐ Tea: Green* (including matcha), black and white teas (without sweeteners) daily

