



[www.foodandfriends.org/nutrition](http://www.foodandfriends.org/nutrition)

Food & Friends' **Cooking for Health Energy and Wellness (CHEW)** cooking classes have moved online! Learn basic principles of nutrition and cooking skills straight from our registered and licensed dietitians. We'll cover common and not-so-common food items, showcase different methods of food preparation and help you build confidence in the kitchen.

## Eating for Your Best Brain Health

By **Penelope Taylor, RDN, LD**, *Food & Friends Community Dietitian*

Contact Penelope at [ptaylor@foodandfriends.org](mailto:ptaylor@foodandfriends.org) or 202-269-6898

You've probably heard of "heart healthy diets" and you might even follow one. Or, perhaps you make food choices to improve the health of your gut or to help control your blood glucose. But, have you ever thought about eating for the part of your body that makes the food decisions for you? In other words, do you purposefully eat for your best brain health?



If not, never fear, you are likely already making food choices that help your brain be the best it can be! No fancy foods or restrictive diet plans are necessary. Eating for brain health is simply continuing your basic healthy eating pattern – whole grains, legumes, olive or canola oil, and plenty of fruits and veggies – with the emphasis on three key components:

### **Omega-3 fatty acids**

Omega-3s are healthy fats that are essential for brain function. Essential means that our bodies cannot make this compound, so we must eat foods that contain it. By eating Omega 3 fatty acids, we provide our brain with the fuel it needs to think and make decisions. Even more, the presence or absence of Omega-3s can directly affect our mood – low levels are associated with a higher risk of depression.

- The very best sources of Omega-3s are found in **fish** – especially fatty fish such as salmon, herring, sardines and trout.
  - Eat **1-3 servings per week**.



- Omega -3s can also be found in some **plant sources** - walnuts, chia seed, ground flax seed, and canola oil. Because your body has to convert the Omega-3s found in plants into the compound needed for the brain, you will need to eat more of the plant sources than the seafood sources.
  - Eat **5 servings per week**
    - **1 serving of nuts = ¼ cup**
    - **1 serving of chia seeds = 2 TBSP**
    - **1 serving of ground flax seeds = 1 TBSP**
    - **1 serving of canola oil = 1 TBSP**



### Berries

Berries of all types – blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, etc. – contain compounds that protect the brain from the effects of aging and inflammation. They can even help prevent or reduce age-related memory loss. So grab these naturally sweet treats and enjoy. Select fresh or frozen.

- Eat **2 servings per week**
  - **1 serving = ½ cup**



### Dark leafy Green Vegetables

Dark leafy green vegetables provide folate, vitamin E, and flavonoids. These all contribute to your best brain health. Add kale, mustard, turnip, or collard greens, spinach, arugula, chard, bok choy, or rapini to your salads, smoothies, or stews.

- Eat **6 servings per week**
  - **1 serving = 1 cup cooked or 2 cups raw**



## Recipes

If it seems overwhelming to fit all of these brain superstars into your diet, no worries. Here is a delicious, easy two-course meal that will satisfy both your mind and your body. The Brain Boosting Salad starter includes dark leafy greens, walnuts, and berries. The Salmon Cakes main course provides an excellent source of Omega-3 fatty acids. Try pairing the salmon cakes with a whole grain side such as wild rice. Let us know what you think!



Questions? Contact Penelope Taylor, Food & Friends Community Dietitian at [ptaylor@foodandfriends.org](mailto:ptaylor@foodandfriends.org) or (202) 269-6898.

***Get more lessons and recipes at [www.foodandfriends.org/nutrition](http://www.foodandfriends.org/nutrition)***





**FOOD & FRIENDS®**

# Healthy Salmon Cakes

Delivering hope, one meal at a time®



## Ingredients

- 1 large egg
- 1 15 oz canned salmon—drained
- 1/2 cup whole wheat bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt or sour cream
- 1 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp white vinegar or lemon juice
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 2 TBSP finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1-2 TBSP olive oil for cooking

### Prep Time:

20 minutes

### Total Time:

30 minutes

### Serves:

6

Recipe modified from:  
Wellplated.com

## Directions



1. In a large mixing bowl, lightly beat the egg. Add the drained salmon to the bowl. Add bread crumbs, Greek yogurt, Dijon, white vinegar, onion powder, garlic powder, and cayenne. With a fork, lightly mix to combine, breaking apart the salmon further. Gently stir in the parsley.
2. Scoop the mixture by 1/3 cupfuls and shape into 6 patties that are about a 1/2 inch thick. Arrange on a plate.
3. In a large cast-iron or similar sturdy-bottomed skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium. Swirl to coat. Brown the patties on both sides, until the outsides are very deep golden brown and the patties are cooked through, about 5 to 6 minutes total.
4. Enjoy immediately, topped with Greek yogurt, a squeeze of lemon, and a sprinkle of fresh parsley.