

Good Mood FOOD

Feed your brain the right nutrients and everything feels better – CNM’s Francesca Klöttrup guides us to a good mood

The food we eat is able to directly affect our brain’s activity, including mood, memory and performance. Having a balanced diet which is abundant in natural, fresh whole food is fundamental in keeping us feeling positive, relaxed and ready to combat the stress of daily life.

Protein from pulses, beans and nuts provide the amino acids necessary for the successful transmission of information across our brain. Oils, nuts and seeds are just some sources of good fats required by the body to maintain the healthy physiology of brain cells. Wholegrain carbohydrates, such as brown rice, porridge or rye stabilise energy levels, preventing energy dips throughout the day, reducing feelings of anxiety and promoting healthy sleep patterns.

It’s important to limit the intake of stimulants (sugar, caffeine, alcohol) that drive unnatural dips in mood and energy. Eating unprocessed, organic food reduces the body’s exposure to the toxins that can interfere with the body’s metabolism of nutrients, compromising how effectively our body and mind can function. Regular exercise is also a key way to boost our moods through the release of endorphins.

It can be challenging at first to ensure a plant-based diet is providing the body and brain with adequate nutrients, so enlist the support of a nutritional therapist for personalised guidance.

Banana and sour cherry muffins

Bananas, flaxseed and spelt are sources of tryptophan. This essential amino acid provides the building block for serotonin, a ‘mood boosting’ chemical transmitter in the brain. Sour cherries contain melatonin, a hormone that plays an important role in sleep, when brain chemicals like serotonin are replenished.

By Francesca Klöttrup for CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) (www.naturopathy-uk.com)

Makes **10** | Prep **10 mins** plus soaking |
Cook **30 mins** | Calories **400** (per muffin)

100g (3½oz) coconut oil, melted	1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
150g (5oz) unrefined dehydrated coconut nectar	4 large ripe bananas
280g (10oz) whole grain spelt flour	200g (7oz) sour cherries, chopped
2 flax eggs – 2 tbsp flaxseed mixed with 5 tbsp water	80g (3oz) chopped pecans
1 tsp baking powder	80g (3oz) coconut shavings, lightly toasted (optional)
	a pinch of sea salt

- 1 Preheat the oven to 160°C/Gas Mark 3 and line a muffin tin with paper cases.
- 2 Soak the cherries in hot water, with just enough to cover them, for 30 minutes – prevents the cherries burning in cooking.
- 3 Make the flax egg and leave for 10 minutes.
- 4 In a food processor, combine the coconut oil and nectar, then add in 3 bananas and blend until the mix is just combined.
- 5 Decant the mixture into a bowl. Add the other banana, cut into medium chunks. Fold in the remaining ingredients until the flour is fully incorporated (save a few pecans and coconut shavings to garnish).
- 6 Place 2 tbsp mix in each muffin case, garnish and bake for 30 minutes or until the centres spring back when lightly pressed.
- 7 Remove from the oven and allow to cool.



20g Total fat	11.7g Saturates	0.17g Salt	22.2g Sugar	5.8g Protein
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Chickpea 'tofu' with smoky almond crumbs and lemon mayo

A great protein-boosting snack, which provides 'nutritional co-factors' such as vitamin B6, zinc, manganese and folate, needed for motivation pathways in the brain. Chickpea flour is also a source of selenium, a mineral found to elevate mood and decrease anxiety. Nuts, with their abundance of essential fatty acids, help maintain brain cell structure, too.

By Francesca Klotturp for CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) (www.naturopathy-uk.com)

Makes **10-15** fingers | Prep **25 mins** plus soaking and cooling | Cook **25 mins** | Calories **335** (per finger)

FOR THE 'TOFU'

150g (5½oz) chickpea flour
1 tsp salt
 a pinch of turmeric
720ml (25fl oz) water
2 tbsp coconut oil
FOR THE CRUMB
300g (10½oz) whole almonds
2 tsp sweet smoked paprika
3 tsp ground oregano
2 tsp salt
150g (5½oz) gluten-free/chickpea flour
50ml (1¾fl oz) water

FOR THE 'MAYO'

200g (7oz) cashew nuts, soaked in water overnight
100-125ml (3-4fl oz) almond milk
 finely grated zest and juice of **¼** of a lemon
1 tsp mustard powder
½ tsp salt
1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

- For the 'tofu', lightly oil a 450g (1lb) loaf tin or 15cm (6in) cake tin/baking tray with the coconut oil. If you only have something larger; double up the recipe, or the 'tofu' won't set deep enough for optimum slicing.
- Place the chickpea flour in a bowl with the salt and turmeric, slowly adding half the water, whisking to combine smoothly.
- Boil the remaining water in a saucepan, reduce the heat to a simmer and quickly add the chickpea flour mixture, beating vigorously for 8-10 minutes so the mixture becomes thick, smooth and glossy.
- Pour into the loaf tin and leave to cool at room temperature for about 45-60 minutes – the longer it sits the firmer it will get.
- Meanwhile, make the almond crumb. Place the almonds, paprika, oregano and salt in a processor and pulse until the almonds are fine, but not dust, retaining some texture (you may have to scrape the nuts from the sides between pulses). Tip the crumb into a wide bowl and leave to one side.
- For the 'mayo', drain the cashew nuts and rinse thoroughly with fresh water.
- Place all the ingredients in a blender and blitz until smooth and creamy. Taste, add more lemon juice, salt or vinegar as required. Decant into an airtight container and store in the fridge for up to 5 days.
- Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.
- Finish off the chickpea 'tofu' by turning it out onto a board and cutting into thick finger-length strips (or desired shape). Whisk the water, little by little, into the gluten-free flour to create a smooth loose batter, then, one by one, submerge the fingers in the batter to coat and dip into the crumb, covering all the 'tofu' and place on a baking tray.
- Bake for 15 minutes until hot and crispy and serve with the mayo and fresh salad.
- The crumbed tofu will keep up to 3 days stored in an airtight container in the fridge.

TIP Separate the almond crumb into two bowls for dipping. If the crumb becomes too damp from the residual batter mixture, it will be reluctant to stick, so the second bowl provides a fresh batch.

22.6g Total fat
4.3g Saturates
0.65g Salt
4.3g Sugar
12.7g Protein

Pea, spinach and kale green soup

Pea protein keeps energy levels up, while spinach and kale provide omega -3 to keep the brain's nerve cells firing optimally. Dark leafy greens contain folic acid, which can be low in people with depression, and magnesium, which calms the central nervous system and our racing minds.

By Francesca Kloettrup for CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine) (www.naturopathy-uk.com)

Serves **4** | Prep **15 mins** | Cook **15 mins** | Calories **231** (per serving)

205g (7oz) frozen garden peas	235g (8½oz) cooked cannellini beans
1 onion	250ml (9fl oz) vegetable stock
3 celery stalks	sea salt and black pepper, to taste
1 garlic clove, crushed	TOPPINGS
160g (5½oz) spinach leaves	a dollop of dairy-free yoghurt
100g (3½oz) kale, chopped and large stalks removed	fresh herbs and seeds

0.7g Total fat	0.2g Saturated fat	0.12g Salt	2.0g Sugar	16.3g Protein
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1 Slice the onion and celery and sauté in a pan with some olive oil and a bit of salt and pepper until soft. Add the garlic and cook for a further minute. Add in the kale and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.

2 Stir in the stock, bring it to a simmer and then add in the frozen peas and cannellini beans. Let sit for 4-5 minutes until the peas are thawed, but not over-cooked (they'll lose their vibrant green).

3 Start to transfer the soup mixture into a blender (make sure it's not piping hot), adding the spinach leaves and blend the soup in batches.

4 The spinach will cook in the residual heat of the soup and retain its fresh green colour. Taste and season the soup and serve in a warmed bowl with a dollop of dairy-free yoghurt, fresh herbs and seeds.

TIP Keeping for later? Allow the soup to completely cool and store in the fridge in an airtight container for 3 days. Reheat low and slow to prevent the soup from splitting and turning a muddy green.



The recipes on pages 37-39 are by Francesca Kloettrup, a chef and nutritionist, who leads the Vegan Natural Chef Diploma Training at the College of Naturopathic Medicine (www.naturopathy-uk.com)

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