

Recipes



After beating your way to the health food store or scrambling over each other in the health section in the supermarket to get that bag of buckwheat and the last bag of chickpeas, you get it home and think **what do I do with it now?**

Easy Lentil Soup

1 stick of celery
1 onion
1 clove garlic
100g of lentils
1 tin of tomatoes
Pinch of mixed herbs
Pinch of paprika
Chopped parsley
Water

serves 2

Chop the celery, onion and garlic. Put a little olive oil in a pan and add the vegetables. Cook for few minutes add the lentils, dried herbs and a tin of tomatoes. Stir, then add enough water to cover the lentils and veg. Bring to the boil and simmer for 20 minutes. When cooked, blend to make smooth. Add parsley and black pepper to taste. This soup freezes well.

Mexican Bean Salad

serves 4

1 tin black beans, drained and well rinsed
1 tin chickpeas, drained and well rinsed
Half an onion, diced
1 green chillies, seeded and chopped (optional)
1 red pepper, diced

Half a bunch fresh coriander, chopped
2 plum tomato, diced
7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or flaxseed oil
Juice of 1 lime
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl, mix well and allow to sit 1 hour before serving.

Tabbouleh

serves 2

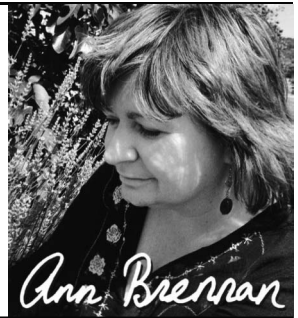
100g bulgar wheat (cracked)
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp olive oil or flaxseed oil
2 tomatoes, chopped
Freshly chopped mint
Freshly chopped parsley, or coriander
Black pepper
4 spring onions, finely sliced
You can also put in some red/green peppers for a change

1. Place the bulgar wheat in a bowl and add twice its volume of boiling water. Cover tightly and leave for about 20 minutes until the water has been absorbed. Allow to cool a little.

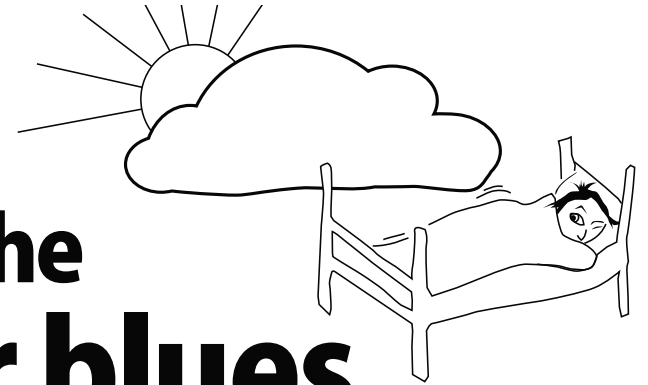
2. Add the lemon juice and oil, season with pepper and mix well. Leave for about 1 hour for the Bulgar wheat to cool and absorb the dressing.

3. Add the tomatoes, spring onions, parsley and mint just before serving.

WORDS free on health



Beating the winter blues



At this time of year many people find their mood and energy levels are low. Here's some advice to help you through the winter months.

I'm asked a lot about ways to improve stamina and lift the mood. I find one of the best ways is through diet. I always advise people to stay away from the refined, processed and sugary foods. They enter your blood stream easily, which gives you immediate energy, but that energy is not sustainable. It burns off too quickly leaving you feeling tired and

irritable. Most people are not instantly aware of these effects. When their energy levels fall suddenly, they will need to reach for another coffee, chocolate bar or packet of crisps.

With this in mind, see inside for my tips on which foods to include in your diet and which to avoid.

For information about herbal medicine and nutritional consultations contact Ann Brennan on 07745 898911 or visit www.annbrennan.co.uk

Using diet to increase energy and lift your mood

When it comes to diet, it is easy to slip in to a rut and repeat the same limited menu week after week. Often with a little experimentation and a few new ideas our diets can be improved, and the health benefits can be enormous.

Try some of the ingredients listed opposite. These foods are full of antioxidants and high in many vitamins (especially the B vitamins) which help to uplift the mood. They are also a great source of soluble fibre which is cleansing to the digestive system, helping us to avoid that sluggish bloated feeling. The benefits of including these ingredients in your diet are numerous – improved memory, stable cholesterol levels and improved immune function. They also help keep arteries and blood vessels in good shape.

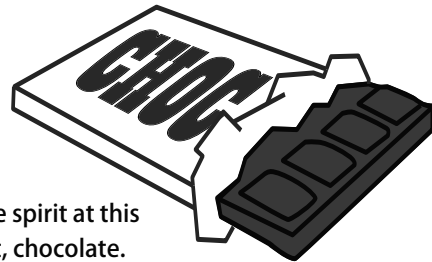
Additionally, these foods will give a slow rise in blood sugar and keep it at a stable level. Your body will no longer have to ask you for a quick fix. As the blood sugar steadies, so will the mood swings. As your cortisol levels reduce you will automatically start to feel happier and calmer inside.

The benefits of dark chocolate

I wanted to include one food that is also good for the spirit at this time of year: dark chocolate. Yes, you heard me right, chocolate.

Studies have shown that dark chocolate can reduce blood pressure and levels of bad (LDL) cholesterol. Dark chocolate also contains mood-enhancing alkaloids.

Now, even though there are several benefits of dark chocolate, as with anything else, moderation is key. So I do not suggest eating bars and bars of the stuff, but 1 to 2 squares per day is optimal. You need to choose a chocolate that is organic and that contains at least 70% cocoa.



include

✓ Grains and seeds

The high protein content of whole grains are great for a slow release of energy. Eat them daily to lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and asthma. They can lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels too.

Choose from amaranth, buckwheat, bulgar wheat, quinoa, wild rice and rye. Porridge with nuts or oatcakes with any nut butter are great too.

✓ Pulses

Pulses are a good source of amino acids which play an important role in wound healing, detoxification and immune function. They are involved the manufacture of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and melatonin which influence mood and sleep patterns.

Look for adzuki, black eye, broad, lima, cannelloni, haricot, kidney or pinto beans, alfalfa sprouts, chickpeas, lentils, mung beans and green split peas.

✓ Oils

A low fat diet must include enough of the good oils that our bodies need. The essential fatty acids (omega 3, 6, and 9) are just that – essential. The health benefits are enormous and they are a rich source of antioxidants.

They improve joint mobility, reduce the inflammatory response, improve memory, regulate cholesterol levels and keep our arteries and blood vessels in good shape. They also improve our immune function, regulate our energy levels and uplift our mood.

Good sources are olive, flaxseed and hempseed oils, nuts, seeds, and fish oils.

avoid

✗ Artificial sweeteners

I suggest avoiding sugar substitutes such as aspartame or saccharine. Whilst some studies indicate they are harmless, others associate them with symptoms such as joint pain, headaches, tinnitus, depression, anxiety attacks, poor concentration and memory loss.

✗ Concentrated fruit juice

Try to avoid fruit juices that are made from concentrate. Fruit juices are a good source of vitamins, but in concentrated form they are also a source of fast-release glucose. The energy released burns off too quickly and is not sustainable.

Instead look for juices that are not reconstituted, or juices containing lots of pulp.

✗ Hydrogenated vegetable oil

Hydrogenation and interesterification is an industrial process used to make oil more solid, provide longer shelf-life in baked products and a longer fry-life for cooking oils. It can be found in a huge variety of food products and is of no value except to the bank balance of the manufacturer. The big problem is that hydrogenated oil is laden with trans fat. This can cause heart disease and diabetes.

Always try to use only traditional natural fats and oils such as butter (small amounts), extra virgin olive oil, nut oils, flax oil or the tropical oils such as coconut.

Tip: When buying oils, always choose cold pressed. Use sunflower and olive oils for cooking, flax seed or hemp seed oil for dressings.
