

BRAIN HEALTHY RECIPES

for the

LATINO FAMILY KITCHEN

PRESENTED BY:

UsAgainstAlzheimer's

KU ALZHEIMER'S
DISEASE CENTER
The University of Kansas Medical Center



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Introduction

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The urgent need for brain-healthy eating in Latino families

Did you know Latinos are 1.5 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's or dementia than non-Latino Whites? Hundreds of thousands of Latinos currently live with Alzheimer's in the United States. In most cases, Latinas in their mid-40s serve as their caregivers. Alzheimer's heavily impacts Latino families. Fortunately, new scientific data point to healthy eating as one way to reduce the likelihood of developing Alzheimer's. We created this cook book to empower Latino families to celebrate identity, culture, and tradition through nourishing foods that promote brain health.

Brain-healthy Latino cooking

This cook book is not about putting you on a rigid diet. Instead, we encourage you to use it to optimize your familiar Latino recipes with brain-healthy ingredients and cooking styles. We use ingredients that you may already have at home, or can easily pick up at the local grocery store.

Weight management and heart health are important parts of protecting your brain health. We consider heart-healthy foods to be brain-healthy foods. Hopefully, these recipes will help you maintain a healthy heart and weight while also keeping your mind sharp and your body energized.

There is no single food that keeps the brain healthy. Instead, you can promote brain health by increasing your intake of a variety of foods such as vegetables, leafy greens, fruits, berries, fish, and other seafood, and by reducing your intake of saturated fats (such as those in butter, cheese and red meat), alcohol, sugar, and salt. Check out [this article](#) to learn more about how food affects brain health.

Brain health is a family affair

Any Alzheimer's patient or caregiver can tell you that the disease is devastating. As a result, we should try everything we can to prevent it. However, few caregivers realize that adopting brain-healthy foods today can reduce the risk of developing



Alzheimer's later in life for themselves and their families.

In addition, Alzheimer's is seen as a disease that mainly affects old people. But as many Latino caregivers know, Alzheimers and dementia, even in just one family member, affects the whole family. Many younger family members have to take on caregiving responsibilities for a disease they think is far off in their own lives. Nutritious foods offer short-term and long-term benefits to brain health for family members of all ages. The recipes in this cook book are a tasty way to get started.

Building brain healthy habits

The great news about brain-healthy eating is that you can benefit from

changing to a healthier diet at any age, and the sooner the better! One of the keys to long-term brain health is shifting eating habits toward brain-healthy meals. Brain-healthy eating habits prioritize nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables and aim for balanced meals and snacks that contain fat, fiber, and protein. The recipes outlined here are delicious choices to include in a balanced, brain-healthy diet. They can also benefit your heart, bones, blood, and digestive system.

These recipes are practical for caregivers and those living with Alzheimer's, as they use common ingredients. While we await a cure for Alzheimer's the least we can do is take care of ourselves and those we love while enjoying every sip or bite.





PREP TIME: 10 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN
BLENDER REQUIRED

COOK TIME: 10-15 MIN
SERVINGS: 1-2

Pineapple Papaya Spinach Smoothie

Licuada de piña, papaya, y espinaca

Smoothies - or licuados/batidos, as they are known in Spanish, are a delicious blend of multiple fruits and vegetables, and they're common across many Latin American countries. This smoothie blends multiple fruits native to South and Central America and Mexico- the pineapple, papaya, and banana, with spinach. While smoothies are delicious - they also pack lots of calories, so be sure to only enjoy one serving at a time.

- 1 cup fresh papaya, cubed
- 1 cup frozen pineapple chunks
- 1 medium banana
- 1 cup spinach, lightly packed
- 1 inch fresh ginger, peeled and chopped (optional)
- 10 whole almonds
- 1 cup water (for thicker texture, substitute with your favorite unsweetened dairy or non-dairy low-fat milk)
- 1/2 cup ice (if all your fruit is frozen, you do not need the ice)

Instructions

- Add all ingredients except ice to a high-powered blender, and blend until smooth.
- Gradually add ice and blend until you reach desired consistency.

PREP TIME: 5 MIN

COOK TIME: 20 MIN

TOTAL TIME: 25-30 MIN

SERVINGS: UP TO 8

Watermelon Basil Iced Tea

Té Helado de Sandía y Albahaca

Iced tea is a refreshing and brain-healthy drink, especially during the summer months. Mixed with watermelon, popular in Mexico, Central America, and Brazil, and basil, this iced tea has a sweet flavor and subtle pepper aroma.

- 8 cups boiling water
- 8 tea bags of your choice (herbal teas can be especially flavorful)
- 1/8 medium-sized watermelon
- 1 small bunch fresh basil sprigs
- 1/2 cup ice (for serving)

Instructions

- Pour eight cups boiling water into a heat-resistant pitcher, add the eight tea bags and let steep for 10 minutes.
- Once steeped, remove the tea bags and let the tea cool to room temperature, then chill in the fridge until it's time to serve.
- Cut the watermelon into small triangles.
- Place two watermelon triangles at the bottom of each serving glass, top with a small sprig of basil and two cubes of ice.
- Pour the chilled iced tea over the watermelon, basil, and ice in each serving glass and serve.

Source: <https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/watermelon-basil-iced-tea>





PREP TIME: 5 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 10 MIN
BLENDER REQUIRED

COOK TIME: 5 MIN
SERVINGS: 4

Chia Seed Limeade

Limonada de Chia

Chia limeade is a popular drink in Mexico, especially in the southern state of Chiapas. This recipe uses a simple list of ingredients and is easy to prepare for a refreshing beverage. It is a good replacement for soda with a meal.

6 cups water
1 tbsp chia seeds (tablespoon should be heaping)
2-4 large green limes

Instructions

- Wash limes, cut off the ends, then cut into quarters and remove the seeds (for less tartness, peel off the lime skin).
- Blend the limes and water in a high powered blender for 30 seconds.
- Strain the blend using a tight mesh colander into a pitcher.
- Add the chia seeds to the lime water and allow to rest for 15 minutes. (Note - to make the chia seeds easier to digest, leave them to soak for longer, which will turn them into a gel as they soak up water).
- Serve at room temperature or over ice, with spare slices of lime (optional).

Source: <https://mexicanfoodjournal.com/chia-lime-water/>



PREP TIME: 5-10 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 10-15 MIN

COOK TIME: 5 MIN
SERVINGS: 1-4

Spicy Nuts

Nueces Picantes

Varieties of spicy nuts are enjoyed throughout Latin American countries. The spices used to flavor the nuts vary from culture to culture. While pre-packaged spicy nuts can be purchased at a grocery store, this recipe offers a quick and simple way to make them on your own.

- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cups raw nuts of your choice, mixed and shelled and peeled
- 2 tbsp dried whole chile pequin, or your favorite chile powder
- 2 tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice (1 lime)
- 1/2 tsp salt to taste (optional)

Instructions

- In a large skillet, heat oil on medium heat. Add nuts and stir frequently until they turn golden brown; approximately 5 minutes.
- Stir in seasoning and continue stirring for 1 minute. Remove from heat and transfer to large glass bowl.
- Stir in lime juice and salt until evenly distributed.
- Set aside and let cool.



PREP TIME: 5 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN

COOK TIME: 10 MIN
SERVINGS: 2

Spinach Chips

Chips de Espinaca

Spinach is a brain-healthy leafy-green food found in dishes throughout Latin America. This recipe offers a healthy replacement snack for storebought potato chips. Spinach chips can be enjoyed with lunch or dinner, or as a snack in between meals.

- 4 cups baby spinach (washed and dried)
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp pimentón or your favorite seasoning (a tasty option is cayenne, tumeric, nutritional yeast, and black pepper)
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp Kosher salt, to taste

Instructions

- Heat oven to 325 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- In a bowl, toss the spinach with olive oil, pimentón and garlic powder.
- Place the spinach leaves in a single layer on the baking sheet.
- Bake for 7 to 10 minutes - the leaves should be dry, look slightly darkened, and will shrink by about half their original size.
- Remove from the oven and let sit for five minutes, then serve.

Source: <https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/Baked-Spinach-Chips-34575720>



PREP TIME: 20-30 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 45 MIN

COOK TIME: 15 MIN
SERVINGS: 6

Oven-Fried Yuca

Yuca Frita al Horno

Root vegetables, especially yuca, make for filling and savory snacks or appetizers. People in many Latin American countries enjoy this dish. Using the vegetable oil spray cuts back on fat. To enjoy the maximum health benefits, be sure to limit yourself to 1-2 servings.

- 1 lb fresh yuca (cassava), peeled and cut into 3-inch sections (or 1 lb. peeled frozen yuca)
- 1 can nonstick vegetable oil spray

Instructions

- In a kettle, combine the yuca with enough cold water to cover it by 1 inch. Bring the water to a boil, and slowly simmer the yuca for 20-30 minutes or until it is tender.
- Preheat oven to 350 °F.
- Transfer the yuca with a slotted spoon to a cutting board, let it cool, and cut it lengthwise into 3/4-inch-wide wedges, discarding the thin, woody core.
- Spray a cookie sheet with the vegetable oil spray. Spread yuca wedges in a single layer on the cookie sheet and spray the wedges with vegetable oil spray. Cover with foil and bake for 8 minutes. Uncover and return to oven to bake for an additional 7 minutes.

Source: [Delicious Heart Healthy Latino Recipes](#), National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, 2008



PREP TIME: 20-30 MIN COOK TIME: 15 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 45 MIN SERVINGS: 6

Quinoa and Black Bean Salad

Ensalada de quinoa y frijoles negros

Native to the Andes Mountains, quinoa is a staple grain of Latin Americans in Bolivia and Peru. More recently, it has become a food eaten around the world, recognized for its wide range of nutrients. Mixed with black beans, this salad is a brain-healthy and filling treat on its own or to accompany a full meal.

1/2 cup dry quinoa
1 1/2 cups water
1 1/2 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp lime juice
1/4 tsp cumin
1/4 tsp ground coriander
(dried cilantro seeds)
2 tbsp cilantro, chopped
2 medium scallions, minced
1 can black beans, rinsed and
(15 oz.) drained (cooked from
dry or low sodium canned)
2 cups tomato, chopped
1 medium red bell
pepper, chopped
1 medium green bell pepper
2 fresh green chilis
(or to taste), minced
Black pepper (to taste)

Instructions

- Rinse the quinoa in cold water. Boil water in a saucepan, then add the quinoa. Return to boil, then simmer until the water is absorbed 10-15 minutes. Cool for 15 minutes.
- While quinoa is cooking, mix olive oil, lime juice, cumin, coriander, chopped cilantro, and scallions in a small bowl, and set aside.
- Combine chopped vegetables with the black beans in a large bowl, and set aside.
- Once quinoa has cooled, combine all ingredients and mix well. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Source: [Delicious Heart Healthy Latino Recipes](#), National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, 2008

PREP TIME: 20-30 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 45 MIN

COOK TIME: 15 MIN
SERVINGS: 6

Spinach Tortilla/Quiche

Tortilla Española

Eat like the Spanish! This traditional dish is usually cooked with potatoes, but our recipe lessens the starch and serves up a fluffy, delicious meal.

2 stalks green onion, finely sliced

3 cups broccoli florets and spinach (substitute with kale or arugula)

1/2 cup roma tomatoes, washed and diced

1/2 tsp Kosher salt

1 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp black pepper

1/2 tsp Spanish smoked paprika or cayenne

1/2 cup fat-free milk (substitute non-dairy or lactose free milk)

4 whole eggs (substitute egg whites for fluffier texture, use vegetable low in water in this case)

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 350 °F.
- Toss together green onion, broccoli florets and spinach, tomato, salt, garlic powder, oregano, pepper, and smoked paprika in large bowl.
- Preheat ovenproof nonstick pan over medium heat. Add contents of bowl and sauté 2 minutes or until cooked. Make sure to use additional oil spray on top of a non-stick surface of parchment paper to avoid sticking.
- Add milk and eggs to bowl and whisk to combine. Pour egg mixture into pan with vegetables and spices. Stir to evenly distribute vegetables.
- Place pan on middle oven rack, bake 10 minutes or until cooked. Do not raise temperature to avoid burning eggs.
- Remove pan from oven. Let sit for 2 minutes. Serve.





PREP TIME: 25 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 60 MIN

COOK TIME: 30 MIN
SERVINGS: 4

Grilled Chicken with Peanut Sauce

Pollo a la Parilla con Salsa de Cacahuete/Maní

Grilled chicken dishes are a favorite from Mexico to Argentina. This simple peanut sauce recipe makes the perfect flavorful marinade and sauce for grilled chicken (see chicken recipe next page).

- 3/4 cup creamy natural peanut butter
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 1/4 cup water (add as necessary to achieve desired consistency)
- 1/3 cup reduced sodium tamari or soy sauce
- 3 tbsp honey (substitute agave nectar or brown sugar)
- 1 1/2 tsp grated fresh ginger (or 1/2 tsp ground ginger)
- 1-2 medium garlic cloves, pressed or minced, to taste
- 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes to add spice

Peanut Sauce Instructions

- In a blender or medium-sized mixing bowl, mix together the ingredients until well-blended. If your peanut butter is particularly thick, add more water to thin out the mixture.
- Add your red pepper flakes at serving to add spice.
- Marinate chicken (or substitute protein) in two thirds of your peanut sauce for 30 minutes to 1 hour (or overnight for best results).

PREP TIME: 25 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 60 MIN

COOK TIME: 30 MIN
SERVINGS: 4

Grilled Chicken with Peanut Sauce

Pollo a la Parilla con Salsa de Cacahuete/Maní

Grilled chicken dishes are a favorite from Mexico to Argentina. This simple peanut sauce recipe makes the perfect flavorful marinade and sauce for grilled chicken (see peanut sauce recipe previous page).

- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil (substitute peanut avocado, or grapeseed oil)
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (organic or hormone free if possible; substitute with plant-based protein if desired)
- 1 lime, halved
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Cilantro and parsley to taste

Chicken Instructions

- Cut lime halves and set aside.
- Remove chicken breasts from peanut sauce marinade and drizzle with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.
- Using long tongs, place chicken breasts on grill and cook, covered on high, 3 minutes. Flip breasts and continue cooking on high, 3 more minutes.
- Reduce grill heat to low and flip chicken again.
- Place limes, cut side down, on grill. Cover and continue cooking, 3 minutes more.
- Flip chicken again and cook 3 more minutes on low (or until meat thermometer reads 160 °F) when inserted into the thickest part of the meat.
- To serve, remove chicken and limes to plate. Squeeze grilled lime on chicken and top with cilantro and/or parsley. Serve with remaining third of peanut sauce on the side or drizzled on top.





PREP TIME: 20 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 35 MIN

COOK TIME: 10-20 MIN
SERVINGS: 1-3

Baked Fish Tacos with Mango & Avocado Salsa

Tacos de Pescado al Horno Con Salsa de Mango y Aguacate

Reinvent this favorite Mexican dish with brain healthy protein and salsa ingredients (see baked fish recipe next page).

- 1-2 ripe mangos, diced into small pieces
- 1-2 ripe avocados, diced into small pieces
- 1-2 limes, juiced
- 1 bnch. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt (to taste)
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil (substitute avocado, grapeseed, or coconut oil)
- 1 fresh raw jalapeño (substitute pinch of paprika or cayenne pepper)

Mango & Avocado Salsa Instructions

- In a bowl, mix all of your ingredients gently and serve on top or on the side of your tacos. Set aside until tacos are ready.
- DO NOT let this salad sit out for too long. Make a little bit before you think the tacos will be ready to serve to avoid the avocado getting brown.

PREP TIME: 20 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 35 MIN

COOK TIME: 10-20 MIN
SERVINGS: 1-3

Baked Fish Tacos with Mango & Avocado Salsa

Tacos de Pescado al Horno Con Salsa de Mango y Aguacate

Reinvent this favorite Mexican dish with brain healthy protein and salsa ingredients (see mango & avocado salsa recipe previous page).

1 lb. tilapia (wild ocean water fish preferred; substitute salmon or mahi)
1/2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1/2 tsp paprika
1/2 tsp cumin
1/2 tsp chili powder (optional)
1/2 tsp onion powder
1/2 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp salt (to taste)
1/4 tsp pepper
3 corn or flour tortillas
1 cup spinach (optional)

Fish & Taco Instructions

- Place all taco ingredients (tilapia, coconut oil, lime juice, and spices) into a gallon-sized Ziplock bag or mix in large bowl.
- Marinate 30 minutes (for meal preppers, you can keep the fish marinating overnight in a tight zipped bag or container).
- Preheat oven to 400 °F and line the baking container or sheet with parchment paper, held down by a generous amount of oil spray under the paper and on top of it so the fish won't stick and clean up is easy.
- Place the contents of the Ziplock bag onto the baking sheet and bake for 10 minutes, or until the tilapia is fully cooked and easily flakes with a fork.
- Cut into chunks.

Assembly

- Fill a warm corn or flour tortilla with cubed fish and top with or serve alongside mango and avocado salsa.
- For extra nutrients, serve over a generous amount of salad or leafy greens like spinach, kale, or mesclun.





PREP TIME: 40 MIN
TOTAL TIME: 70 MIN

COOK TIME: 20-30 MIN
SERVINGS: 12

Yellow Plantain & Meat Casserole

Pastelón de Plátanos y Carne

This traditional Puerto Rican dish combines the sweetness of brain healthy plantains with protein and vegetables makes a filling family entree.

Dough

- 8 large yellow plantains, ripe and peeled
- 10 cups water
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Other Layers

- 5 egg whites, beaten
- 1 1/2 cups cooked green beans
- 1/2 cup low-fat mozzarella, shredded

Meat Filling

- 1 1/2 lbs lean ground beef
- 2 medium green peppers, without seeds, chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 3 bay leaves
- 1/4 cup cilantro
- 1 cup low-sodium beef broth (package must say low-sodium)
- 5 ajicitos (tiny sweet peppers)
- 1/2 tbsp annatto paste (achiote)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1 cup tomato sauce

Instructions

- Preheat oven to 350 °F.
- Brown the meat in a large pot. Drain the fat and add the remaining meat filling ingredients. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Set aside.
- Boil the peeled plantains in 10 cups of water until soft, then drain. In a large bowl, mash the plantains, then add the olive oil. Mix well, making it into a soft dough. In separate bowl, beat the egg whites until they are foamy.
- Spread half of the plantain dough in an 11x14" baking pan. Add a layer of the meat filling, egg whites, and half of the green beans.
- Repeat these layers, and top with final layer of plantains and egg whites. Sprinkle with the mozzarella cheese.

Source: [Delicious Heart Healthy Latino Recipes](#), National Institutes of Health, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, 2008

Learn More About Brain Health

For more resources to prevent, treat, and care for family members with Alzheimer's Disease or another dementia, visit:

- www.latinosagainstalzheimer.org
 - www.kualzheimer.org
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About Chef Ruth Vaca

Ruth Vaca is a plant-based chef, consultant, contributor and food enthusiast based in Bloomington, Indiana. Ruth is committed to sharing recipes that include her favorite plant foods with those looking for delicious ways to keep their minds sharp. Of Mexican descent, both Ruth's great aunt and grandmother passed away after dementia diagnoses. Ruth is committed to conscientious eating that allows us to protect our memory and brain health. She loves to highlight the benefits of Latino food and culture in everyday meals. For more, please visit: [Instagram.com/yourfriendlyvegan](https://www.instagram.com/yourfriendlyvegan) or email yourfriendlyvegan@gmail.com.

