

## BAKED BERRY OATMEAL

Serves 8

### INGREDIENTS

- 225g rolled oats (can be gluten free if needed)
- 1tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- Pinch of salt
- 1tsp ground cinnamon
- 30g honey or maple syrup
- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 2 whole eggs beaten
- 350ml milk of choice
- 30g melted unsalted butter or dairy free spread
- 2tsp vanilla extract
- 30g sunflower seeds (optional)
- 30g nut butter or vanilla protein powder, (optional)
- 150g fresh or frozen berries.

Nutrition per serving (44g slices) 176kcal, Total Fat 14g, Carbohydrates 5.8g of which sugars 4.2g, Protein 4.4g.

You can make this the day before and reheat in the morning to serve. Delicious with Greek or Coconut yogurt. For those who like additional protein either stir in a spoonful of nut butter or a scoop of protein powder.

### METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 180C, gas mark 4. Lightly oil a baking dish or tin about 20cm x 20cm
2. In a large bowl, combine all of the ingredients and mix well.
3. Transfer to the prepared dish.
4. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until centre is set and the top is lightly golden.
5. Let sit for 10 minutes before serving.
6. Top with yogurt or milk to serve.

## ABOUT CHRISTINE BAILEY

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Christine is an experienced functional performance Nutritionist and works across Thomas Franks providing evidence based nutrition support.

Christine works closely with our schools and Corporate clients to deliver a range of additional support including one to one support, workshops, cookery demos, talks, and presentations on all aspects of nutrition.

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Getting ready for exams? Whether it's finals, GCSEs, AS or A Levels we want to make sure you fuel your body right. In addition to putting in the work beforehand remember that how well you eat, sleep and manage your nerves are important. A brain that is optimally nourished will help improve your focus, concentration and energy levels before and during the exam period.

Nutritionist Christine Bailey shares some top tips for what to eat leading up to the exams.



## PLAN AHEAD

The revision period can often mean long days and nights so planning your snacks and meals becomes particularly important. If you're stuck in the library for long periods of time make sure you pack sufficient healthy snacks (see below) to keep energy levels high. Stick to regular mealtimes and don't be tempted to skip meals. Your brain uses at least 20% of your calories and needs a regular supply to energy and nutrients through the day for optimal performance.

### Study food 'do's:

- ◆ The power of Protein
- ◆ Importance of brain boosting fats
- ◆ Protective antioxidants
- ◆ Switching to wholegrain carbohydrates
- ◆ Keeping hydrated



## PROTEIN POWER

Protein is not just great for muscle building! In fact they are the building blocks for all your brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) that keep you focused, help remember information and boost mood. At each meal (including breakfast) make sure 1/4 of your plate is lean protein like fish, Greek yogurt, beans, lentils, poultry, and eggs. Protein also helps balance your blood sugar levels avoiding energy dips through the day which can affect focus and concentration.

## BRAIN BOOSTING FATS

Did you know that 60% of your brain is actually fat? But you need the right kind of fats and in particular omega 3 fats (think salmon, mackerel, sardines, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseed). Getting plenty of these fats can help boost cognitive function and mood.

## PROTECTIVE ANTIOXIDANTS

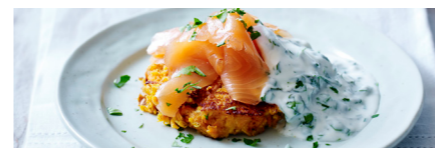
Not only do fruit and vegetables provide the essential nutrients to help produce important brain chemicals but they contain protective antioxidants to keep the brain working optimally. Top winners include the berries (blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, and blackberries) and dark, leafy vegetables (broccoli, spinach, pak choi, cabbage, kale) but the trick is to get as much colour on the plate as possible.

## STAY HYDRATED

Taking a bottle of water to an exam is already a habit for some but remembering to drink enough water whilst revising is something not so many students do. Our bodies are 70% water and when we are properly hydrated, we will perform better. Keeping hydrated will improve clarity, energy and focus and help prevent tiredness and headaches.

## SLOW AND STEADY CARBOHYDRATES

Yes slow and steady wins the race! Your brain's primary fuel is glucose, which your body derives from carbohydrates. Slow releasing carbohydrates (wholegrain rice, oats, quinoa, wholegrain bread, sweet potato, beans and vegetables) take longer to break down in the body. This provides your brain with a slow and steady supply of glucose to keep your brain and body fuelled through the day. Take off the plate the sugars, fizzy drinks and processed foods (cakes, sweets, white pasta etc) which are likely to cause your blood sugar to sea saw leading to energy crashes and poor concentration.



## WHAT TO EAT THE NIGHT BEFORE

The night before an exam is an important time for smart eating. Even if you're nervous, try to eat a meal which contains the following: 1/4 of your plate protein foods, 1/4 of the plate slow releasing carbohydrates, and 1/2 the plate colourful vegetables. Avoid anything too greasy – so nothing fried or from the local takeaway! Don't eat too late either as this can interfere with sleep.

A good idea is some baked salmon, tofu or chicken with a selection of vegetables and wholegrain rice or baked sweet potato. For dessert have some fruit and Greek yogurt with a little dark chocolate if wished. Don't try new foods the night before the exam. You want to avoid anything that could upset your stomach.

Even if you're doing some last-minute studying, avoid drinking coffee late as it will affect your sleep quality and ability to fall asleep.

## Exam day

For the day of the exam, the number one rule is to make sure you eat.

For an effective breakfast, include slow-release carbohydrates, like porridge oats, oat cakes, or wholegrain toast, as they provide slow-releasing energy. Add a protein food, such as yogurt, beans, smoked salmon or eggs to keep you feeling full and improve mental alertness. Ideally add in some fruit or vegetables for additional nutrients.

Here are some suggestions:

- Porridge made with milk or milk alternative with added seeds or nut butter. Top with yogurt and berries.
- Scrambled eggs with wholegrain toast and grilled tomatoes
- Omelette with spinach and oat cakes
- Smoothie – milk or milk alternative, berries or banana, nut butter, spoonful of oats.
- Smoked salmon, avocado and wholegrain toast
- Low sugar muesli or overnight oats with nuts and seeds, yogurt and fruit
- Cottage cheese, wholegrain crackers, fruit
- Low sugar granola with yogurt and fruit
- Chia puddings
- Baked berry Oatmeal (see recipe below)
- Greek yogurt, mixed seeds, fruit

For older students remember that while coffee can perk up the brain don't rely on caffeine to keep energy levels up. Green tea is a good alternative and contains L theanine which can boost concentration.

## Healthy Snacks

On the day of the exam and during revision time make sure you have access to healthy snacks. These will help maintain energy levels through the day. Homemade protein bars, energy bites, trail mixes or granola, plain popcorn, oat cakes, Greek yogurt, hummus and vegetable sticks and fruit are all healthy options.

Remember to bring plenty of water and have a water bottle to refill during the day.

For more information on brain foods and supporting mental health with nutrition please refer to our Nutrition and Mental Health Brochure.

## During the day

Eat enough to feel satisfied but not so much as to feel too full. If you eat a large lunch just before an exam, you may feel drowsy and heavy. Instead, try a lighter lunch such as a salad or vegetables and rice with chicken, beans or salmon.

