

The Mind Meal

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The Mind Meal is an excellent idea - good, simple food that can help you to feel different about life. I have found that eating regularly enough to keep my sugar levels from dropping and choosing food that isn't enormously processed does seem to keep me on a more even keel'.

Nigella Lawson (Top UK TV chef and columnist) in The Sunday Express

Vegetarians/vegans: Unfortunately there isn't a straight substitute for the fish in this recipe. The fish protein can be replaced with other protein-containing foods such as tofu chunks or beans, but you'd also need to take a fish oil supplement, or have additional linseed/flax or hemp seeds and/or a supplement containing these oils.

THE MIND MEAL

**Wheat-free pasta with pesto sauce
and oil rich fish**

Avocado salad and seeds

Fruit and oatcake dessert



The 'Mind Meal' was launched by Mind, the UK's leading mental health charity, and devised by nutritional therapist Amanda Geary of The Food and Mood Project.

The Mind Meal aims to draw attention to the important relationship between food and mood and serves as an example of what can be done with some of the good mood foods that are generally recommended as beneficial for emotional and mental health.

The Mind Meal serves two hungry people or up to four not-so-hungry people and in the UK costs approx £2.50-£5.00 per head (including some organic ingredients).

Preparation time for the whole meal will be about 20 mins, depending on how confident you are in the kitchen.

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Ingredients and methods

Wheat-free pasta with pesto sauce and oil rich fish

250g/9oz (approx) packet wheat free pasta such as 'Orgran' corn & vegetable pasta shells

100g/4oz (approx) jar pesto sauce (This is made from basil, olive oil, garlic, pine kernels and Parmesan cheese. Vegan pesto will be dairy free)

180g/6oz (approx) tin salmon or other oil rich fish (e.g. mackerel, herring, sardines, pilchards) in brine, oil or spring water



1. Cook the pasta in boiling water as per the instructions on the packet.
2. When the pasta is ready, drain and transfer to a warmed serving dish. Add approx one tablespoon pesto sauce per person and gently mix in with the pasta.
3. Open the tin of fish, drain liquid, remove any large bones and flake with a fork. Add to serving dish containing pasta and pesto and mix gently together.

Avocado salad and seeds

250g/8oz (approx) mixed lettuce bag or 80g/4oz (approx) watercress

One avocado

A handful (approx 25g/1oz/1/4 cup) sunflower seeds

A handful (approx 25g/1oz/1/4 cup) pumpkin seeds



1. Open the packet of mixed salad and place in a serving dish.
2. Remove skin and stone from avocado. Cut avocado into small pieces and add to mixed salad.
3. Sprinkle on the seeds.
4. Serve plain, with olive oil or the salad dressing of your choice.

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Fruit and oatcake dessert

2 apples

2 bananas

8 dried apricots (preferably additive free)



6-12 oatcakes

40g/2oz/1/2 cup (broken) walnuts

1. Peel bananas and rinse apples and dried apricots.
2. Cut fruit into small pieces (remove apple cores) and place all together in a small saucepan.
3. Add a minimum of 3 tablespoons of water and simmer gently for approx 10 minutes or until fruit is soft, adding more water to prevent the mixture becoming too dry and sticking to the pan. (This tastes great as it is but, if available you could add a dash of lemon juice and/or a teaspoon of chopped ginger and/or a pinch of cinnamon powder, according to your taste).
4. Meanwhile arrange oatcakes in the bottom of individual bowls (you may have to break them into pieces to make them fit).
5. When fruit mixture is soft, pour into individual bowls to cover the oatcakes. If the fruit mixture contains enough liquid the juices will soak into, and soften, the oatcakes.
6. Serve with a sprinkling of broken walnuts.

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What's in it?

The ingredients of the Mind Meal include foods with valuable vitamins, minerals and essential fats important for emotional and mental health. Also, what the Mind Meal doesn't include is just as important as what it does contain.

The Mind Meal DOES NOT contain:

Artificial additives which can cause a range of food sensitivity reactions in certain people

Added sugar that can give a sudden blood sugar rise followed by a dip in mood and energy an hour or so later. Sugar sensitivity can produce symptoms of confusion, poor concentration, anxiety, irritability, aggression, fatigue and depression.

Stimulants such as chocolate or caffeine which can be associated with feelings of anxiety or panic attacks in vulnerable people

Wheat or dairy foods, as these are the two most common culprit foods associated with food sensitivities associated with food sensitivities and have been associated with depression and fatigue, for

example.

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The Mind Meal DOES contain:

Good mood protein, including tryptophan, is concentrated in the oil rich fish, nuts and seeds and also in the avocado and dried apricots.

Protein is made up of fragments known as amino acids. Some amino acids can have a direct affect on levels of certain brain chemicals. For example, eating foods naturally high in tryptophan can improve mood as the tryptophan is converted by the body to serotonin, an important brain chemical that regulates impulse control and appetite, elevates mood, self-esteem, feelings of optimism and induces calm feelings and sleep. (The banana and avocado also provide some ready-made serotonin.)

Good mood carbohydrates are concentrated in the pasta, oatcakes and fruit.

The absorption of tryptophan into the brain is thought to be greatly enhanced by eating carbohydrate-containing foods and carbohydrate cravings have been explained as a subconscious drive to increase serotonin levels. Carbohydrates that are slow releasing can help the absorption of the tryptophan across the blood brain barrier without creating a rebound hypoglycaemic dip. The oats are particularly important because they have a low Glycaemic Index. Eating foods and meals with a low GI, which release their energy slowly and keep you feeling good for longer, also helps to avoid the roller coaster ride of energy and moods associated with large fluctuations in blood glucose levels.

The natural sugars in the fruit have a gentler effect on the blood sugar levels than added, refined sugar.

Good mood fats are contained in the oil rich fish, nuts and seeds.

The brain is over 60% fat. Avoiding all types of fat - in a low fat diet for example - can lead to anxiety and depression and other mental health problems. Polyunsaturated 'omega 3' fats are particularly important and these are particularly high in the oily rich fish and also present in the pumpkin seeds and walnuts. You need to keep a balance between the omega 3 fats and the other essential 'omega 6' fats which, in the Mind Meal are found in the nuts and seeds.

Good mood vitamins and minerals are contained throughout the Mind Meal.

Vitamins and minerals are essential for emotional and mental health. For example the conversion of the tryptophan protein fragment into the good mood brain chemical serotonin is helped by various 'co-factor' nutrients.

These co-factor nutrients for the tryptophan-to-serotonin conversion are listed below along with the Mind Meal ingredients where they are concentrated:

- Vitamin C found in watercress
- Folic Acid found in avocado, lettuce, walnuts
- Vitamin B6 found in , avocado, banana, sunflower seeds, walnuts, watercress
- Biotin found in corn pasta, oil rich fish, fruit, lettuce
- Zinc found in corn pasta, oats, sardines, walnuts,

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Eating for mental health checklist

Low in potential food stressors

Low in additives

Low in refined/added sugar

Low in stimulants (chocolate/caffeine)

Hypoallergenic (e.g. wheat and dairy)

High in food supporters

Contains essential fats, particularly omega 3 food sources

High in complex carbohydrates (or low Glycaemic Index foods)

High in fruit and vegetables for vitamins and minerals

Contains protein

You can find out more about the Mind Meal and its good mood foods by reading the [Food and Mood Handbook](#). A percentage of royalties from the sale of the Handbook are donated to the charity Mind.

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Please note this self-help information is not intended as an alternative to medical advice.