

Mediterranean Salmon Salad

Leisa Norman, RD, LD, UZIT
Denver Dietetic Association 2020-21

Ingredients

Salmon:

- 1 3oz piece of Salmon
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- Sea salt and Pepper

Salad:

- ¼ cup red onion, chopped
- ¼ cup grape tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cucumber, cubed
- ¼ beets, cubed
- ¼ cup avocado, cubed
- 1 tablespoon pepitas

Dressing:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon fresh rosemary-chopped
- ½ teaspoon fresh sage-chopped
- Sea Salt and pepper, to taste

Steps

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Rub the salmon with olive oil and season both sides with salt and pepper. Place fillet skin-side down on a baking sheet, pour the lemon juice over top and roast for 10-12 minutes or until just cooked through. Time will vary based on the size of your salmon. Watch it carefully as you don't want to overcook it.
2. While salmon is cooking, make dressing by whisking together all the ingredients. Prep salad by adding chopped vegetables to a large salad bowl, and top with pepitas.
3. Once salmon is cooked through, remove from oven and place it on top of salad. Drizzle dressing over salad and enjoy.

Note:

This recipe serves one but it can easily be scaled to serve 2-4 people.

Brain Health Benefits

Salmon: Salmon is very high in omega-3 fatty acids, which can help reduce brain fog and increase memory and concentration. Studies show consuming foods high in these fatty acids could help reduce the symptoms of ADHD and lower the risk of developing certain cancers. All types of salmon are high in omega-3s, but fattier fish sub-species will have more. The research on this varies, but some studies suggest Pacific chinook salmon have one of the highest concentrations.

Cucumbers: Cucumbers contain flavonoids, a group of plant metabolites which are said to provide health benefits through cell signaling pathways and antioxidant effects. This collectively, helps in improving and nourishing our brain health.

Tomatoes: Oxidative stress is one possible cause of declining brain health as people get older, and that process leaves many at an increased risk of neurodegenerative diseases. Tomatoes contain the antioxidant carotenoid lycopene, higher blood levels of which correlate with preserved cognitive function in older adults and less inflammation. More research is needed to prove this association but there are a variety of health benefits to consuming more lycopene-rich foods. Processed tomatoes, such as tomato sauce, are one of the best sources of lycopene.

Avocado: Avocado is a superfood high in monounsaturated fats. These healthy fats keep blood sugar at a steady level and help keep skin, hair, and nails looking and feeling healthy. More importantly, avocados are rich in folate and vitamin K, which improve cognitive brain functions such as concentration and memory. This diverse fruit can be added to smoothies for a creamy texture, but are also delicious on their own, spread on toast, or as the main ingredient in guacamole.

Pepitas or Pumpkin seeds: Pumpkin seeds are rich in omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids and zinc. Data shows that these seeds consist of approximately 73 percent unsaturated fats, which play a role in reducing inflammation. Omega-3s and omega-6s are polyunsaturated fats that can't be made by the body; they help keep the frontoparietal region, the part of the brain known for problem-solving, more fluid. Pumpkin seeds also provide over 70 percent of the recommended daily allowance of zinc, which improves communication between neurons and may help reduce memory loss.

Beets: Beets are high in antioxidants and nitrates. The former can prevent cancer and help the liver detoxify the blood, while the latter increase blood flow to the brain. Beets help the brain to think clearly and increase attention span. Additionally, beets naturally increase energy levels and help boost athletic performance. This root vegetable can be eaten raw in salads or alone, and also makes a great addition to roasted vegetable medleys.

Olive oil: Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) can help boost brain power and halt the progression of the effects of aging on the brain. EVOOs have been linked to better visual memory, verbal fluency, and decreased risk of developing dementia and Alzheimer's disease (AD). Besides the well-documented anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory properties, numerous in vitro and in vivo studies have revealed the potent beneficial effect of EVOO and its phenolic compounds in terms of synaptic function and integrity. Interestingly, recent reports have shed new lights into the possible mechanisms responsible for neuroprotective effects on memory.

Rosemary: Rosemary protects the brain from the effects of neurodegeneration, which can cause or exacerbate Alzheimer's disease and other age-linked conditions. It contains carnosic acid, an antioxidant that guards against chemical-free radicals that lead to degenerative disease. This savory herb can also protect against stroke and decrease macular degeneration and other vision problems. Rosemary has these benefits, whether consumed fresh, dried, or as an oil.

Sage: Since ancient Greece, sage has been sought out for improving cognition and mood. It contains monoterpenes and rosmarinic acid, which not only protect the plant from insects, but also improve memory. Sage is a natural anti-inflammatory, and it may protect the brain in part by inhibiting amyloid deposits, which are linked to diseases like dementia and Alzheimer's.

