

A large, vibrant bowl of quinoa salad is the central focus. The salad is composed of several distinct sections: a pile of bright orange shredded carrots at the top left, a section of purple and white shredded cabbage below it, a large portion of cooked quinoa in the center, and a pile of roasted salmon cubes at the bottom left. Other visible ingredients include chickpeas, broccoli, and sliced avocado. The bowl is set against a dark, textured background.

Reframing the Brain Cookbook

From the Reframing the Brain Cooking Classes

Evelyn Kissinger, RD | Jaumark Pierre, MPH

Presented by Lifestyle Health Initiative
with contributions from Adventist Dietetics + The Promise Life

NOURISH
LEARN
COOK
CONNECT
TRANSFORM

Introduction

Reframing the Brain through Food

This little book was created to help you take the *Reframing the Brain Cooking Classes* experience home with you.

What we eat can help fuel, protect, and support the brain. Plant foods provide important nutrients and protective compounds—including polyphenols, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber—that support brain and whole-body health.

But healthy living is about more than knowing what to eat. Changing old habits can be difficult, but change is possible—one choice, one meal, and one day at a time.

We believe God cares about the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—and gives us strength, wisdom, and grace as we learn healthier ways of living. Inside, you'll find recipes from our cooking classes along with simple explanations of the brain-supportive foods in each dish. We hope you'll keep cooking, learning, sharing, and building habits that nourish your brain and your life.

Nourish your brain. Strengthen your body. Trust God through the journey.



Contributors

Meet the people behind the class.



Evelyn Kissinger, RD

Evelyn Kissinger is a Registered Dietitian and speaker passionate about practical nutrition education and community wellness. She helps people build healthier relationships with food through realistic, sustainable habits and simple lifestyle practices.



Jaumark Pierre, MPH

Jaumark Pierre is a public health professional, creative, and wellness communicator with a background in nutrition, health promotion, Caribbean cooking, and storytelling. He focuses on making wellness education practical, hopeful, and transformative, and is the founder of The Promise Life.

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Ingredients

- ☐ 1 cup warm water (100–110°F — warm, not hot)
- ☐ 2 tbsp organic granulated sugar
- ☐ 2¼ tsp instant yeast (1 packet / 7 g)
- ☐ 3 tbsp vegan butter, melted and cooled
- ☐ 1½ tsp salt
- ☐ 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- ☐ Up to ½ cup additional flour for kneading
- ☐ A little vegetable oil or vegan butter for greasing
- ☐ ¾ cup (95g) chopped walnuts
- ☐ ¾ cup (105g) dried cranberries
- ☐ 1 Tablespoon (21g) honey
- ☐ 1 pinch of nutmeg

Walnut Cranberry Bread



3–4 hrs



8–10 servings

Directions

1. **Activate the yeast** — 5 minutes - In a large bowl, mix the warm water, sugar, and yeast. Leave it for 5 minutes, until it looks foamy/frothy.
2. **Make the dough** - Mix in the melted vegan butter, honey and salt. Gradually stir in the 2½ cups flour, about ½ cup at a time, and nutmeg until a rough dough forms.
3. **Knead** — 5–8 minutes - Put the dough on a lightly floured surface. Knead for 5–8 minutes until it becomes smooth and stretchy. Add a little extra flour if it's very sticky.
4. **First rise** — 1–2 hours - Put the dough into a lightly greased bowl and cover it. Leave it somewhere warm until it doubles in size.
5. **Shape it** - Grease an 8 × 4-inch loaf pan. Punch the risen dough down gently, roll out in a big circle and sprinkle cranberries and walnuts, roll in a log, shape it into a loaf/log, and place it in the pan seam-side down.
6. **Second rise** — 45–60 minutes: Cover it again and let it rise until puffy and almost doubled.
7. **Bake** — 30–35 minutes: Preheat your oven to 350°F. Bake until the top is golden brown, about 30–35 minutes.
8. **Cool**: Let it sit in the pan for 10 minutes, then remove it and let it finish cooling on a rack before slicing.



Cranberries [Learn](#)

Brain protection • Blood flow • Memory

Cranberries are rich in polyphenols, especially anthocyanins and proanthocyanidins, which have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. These compounds may help protect brain cells from oxidative stress and may support healthy blood-vessel function and blood flow to the brain. Emerging human research suggests cranberry consumption may support aspects of memory and cognitive function.



Walnuts [Learn](#)

Omega-3s • Neuroprotection • Healthy aging

Walnuts are especially rich in alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), a plant-based omega-3 fatty acid. They also provide polyphenols and vitamin E-related antioxidant compounds. Together, these nutrients help counter oxidative and inflammatory stress, and contribute to the environment needed for healthy brain function. Observational and clinical research has associated walnut intake with aspects of cognitive health and healthy brain aging.

Mindful Lentil Stew

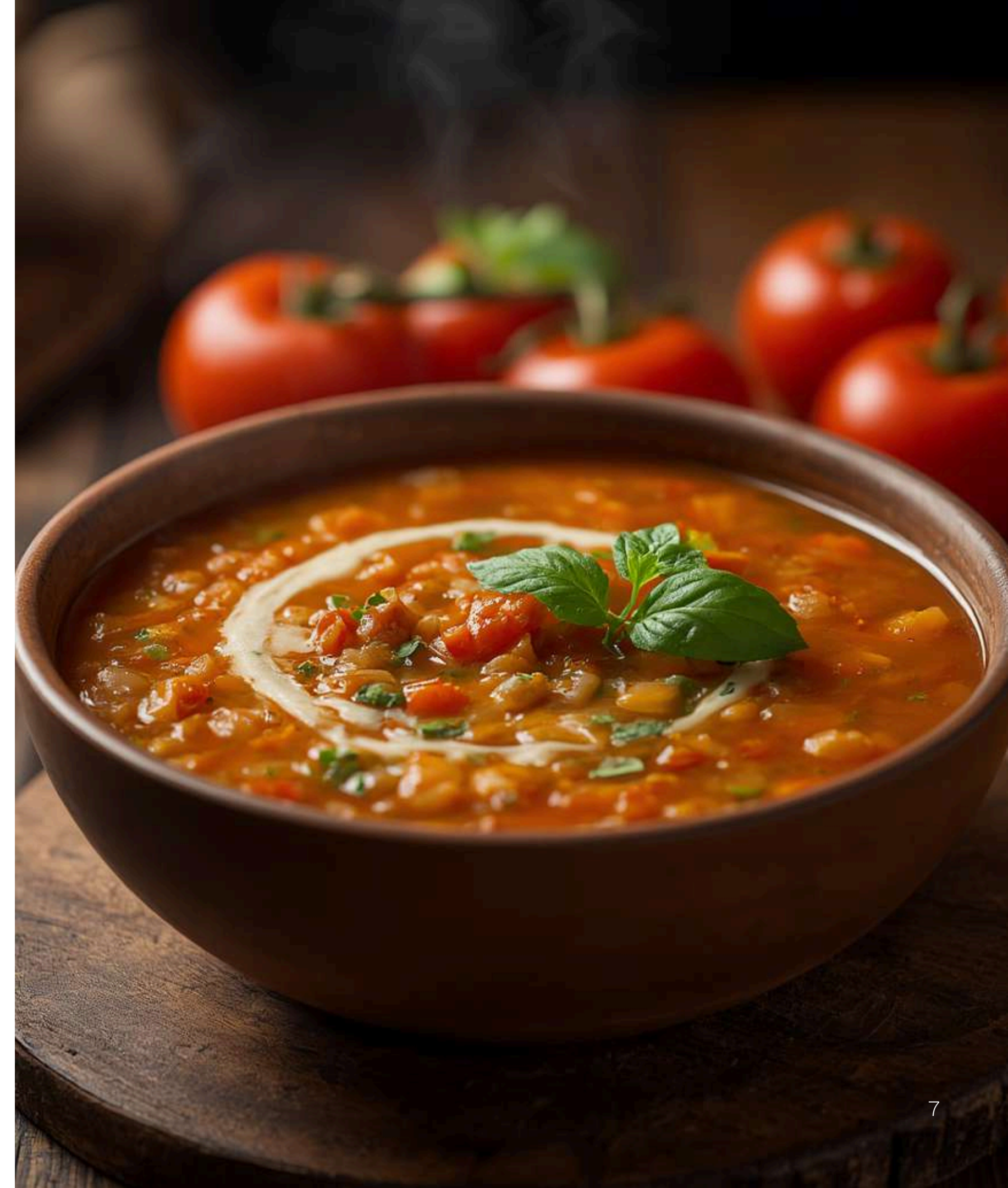
 45 mins  6 servings

Ingredients

- ☐ 2 cups finely diced carrots (about 4 large carrots)
- ☐ 1 cup finely diced celery (about 3 ribs)
- ☐ 3 tsp minced garlic (about 3 cloves)
- ☐ Salt and pepper to taste
- ☐ 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ☐ 1 cup lentils green or brown
- ☐ 1 medium onion
- ☐ 1½ teaspoons paprika
- ☐ Some leaves of fresh parsley, thyme, and cilantro
- ☐ 1½ teaspoon coconut/avocado oil
- ☐ ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes optional
- ☐ 1 dash of allspice and a pinch of cumin
- ☐ 5 cups vegetable broth (prepared with Better Than Bouillon)
- ☐ 1 large lemon

Directions

1. **Sauté veggies:** Cook onion, carrot, celery, and garlic in the oil until soft and fragrant.
2. **Add flavor:** Stir in tomato paste, lentils, and seasonings, cooking briefly.
3. **Simmer:** Add broth and allspice, then cook until lentils are tender.
4. **Blend a little:** Puree a small portion of soup and stir it back in for a creamy texture.
5. **Finish and serve:** Add lemon, herbs, and seasoning to taste, then serve warm.





Lentils [Learn](#)

Folate · Steady energy · Brain health

Lentils are rich in folate, iron, magnesium, plant protein, and fiber. Folate supports normal brain and nervous-system function and helps regulate homocysteine, while iron helps transport oxygen throughout the body, including to the brain. Their fiber and complex carbohydrates also support steadier blood sugar and energy. Legumes such as lentils are an important part of Mediterranean and MIND-style eating patterns associated with healthy cognitive aging.



Garlic [Learn](#)

Plant compounds · Antioxidant activity · Healthy circulation

Garlic contains sulfur-rich compounds with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These compounds may help support cardiovascular health and the body's defenses against oxidative stress. Garlic is a flavorful way to add protective plant compounds to a brain-supportive eating pattern.



Tomatoes

Lycopene · Antioxidant defense · Healthy aging

Tomatoes are one of the richest dietary sources of lycopene, a powerful carotenoid antioxidant. Lycopene helps protect cells against oxidative stress, a process involved in aging throughout the body, including the brain. Cooking tomatoes—especially as tomato paste—makes lycopene easier for the body to absorb, making it a nutritious addition to this stew.



Carrots

Carotenoids · Cell protection · Brain health

Carrots are packed with beta-carotene and other carotenoids, colorful plant compounds with antioxidant activity. Beta-carotene can also be converted into vitamin A, which is important for normal cell and nervous-system function. Regularly eating colorful vegetables provides a variety of protective phytochemicals and is part of dietary patterns associated with better cardiovascular and long-term brain health.



Parsley & Thyme

Antioxidants · Plant compounds · Flavor

Parsley and thyme add more than flavor. These herbs contain polyphenols and other antioxidant plant compounds that help protect cells from oxidative stress. Parsley also provides vitamin K, vitamin C, and carotenoids, while thyme contains aromatic compounds such as thymol. Together, they add a variety of protective phytochemicals to a plant-rich, brain-supportive diet.



Lemon

Vitamin C · Antioxidant protection · Iron absorption

Lemons provide vitamin C and citrus flavonoids, antioxidant compounds that help protect cells from oxidative stress. Vitamin C also helps the body absorb non-heme iron from plant foods such as lentils. That makes lemon particularly useful in this recipe, since iron is needed to transport oxygen throughout the body and support normal brain function.



Stress Support Bowl

 25 mins  2 servings

Ingredients

Salad

- ☐ 1 cup cooked quinoa
- ☐ 1 cup chickpeas
- ☐ 1 handful fresh kale & broccoli
- ☐ ½ cup walnuts
- ☐ 2 Roma tomatoes, chopped
- ☐ 1 tsp chopped jalapeño pepper
- ☐ 1 small avocado, sliced
- ☐ 1 tbsp pumpkin seeds
- ☐ 1 tbsp nutritional yeast
- ☐ Pinch of salt & pepper

Dressing

- ☐ 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ☐ 2 tbsp vegan butter
- ☐ 1 tbsp capers
- ☐ Juice of ½ lemon
- ☐ 1 tbsp smoked paprika

Directions

1. Cook quinoa and chickpeas according to package directions
2. For Dressing: In a skillet, melt vegan butter and add garlic and capers. Sauté lightly. Then add lemon juice and smoked paprika. Stir.
3. Chop kale, tomatoes, jalapeños, and avocado.
4. Build bowl with quinoa and kale as base then add chickpeas, tomatoes, avocado, walnuts, and pumpkin seeds.
5. Sprinkle nutritional yeast then add dressing and stir.



Quinoa

Complex carbs · Magnesium · Sustained energy

Quinoa provides complex carbohydrates, fiber, magnesium, iron, and plant protein. Because the brain requires a continuous supply of energy, meals containing fiber-rich carbohydrates can provide a more sustained source of fuel than highly refined carbohydrates. Magnesium also plays an important role in normal nerve signaling and nervous-system function.



Chickpeas

B vitamins · Steady energy · Nervous-system support

Chickpeas provide complex carbohydrates, fiber, plant protein, folate, iron, and magnesium. Their combination of protein, fiber, and slowly digested carbohydrates can help provide more sustained energy and support stable blood-glucose levels. Folate and magnesium also contribute to normal nervous-system and psychological function.



Kale & Broccoli

Folate · Antioxidants · Cognitive health

Dark green and cruciferous vegetables provide folate, vitamin K, vitamin C, carotenoids, and other protective phytochemicals. Folate is important for normal nervous-system function, while antioxidants help protect cells from oxidative stress. Regular consumption of leafy green vegetables is associated with healthier cognitive aging, making greens an excellent foundation for a brain-supportive meal.



Walnuts

Omega-3s · Neuroprotection · Healthy aging

Walnuts are particularly rich in ALA, a plant-based omega-3 fatty acid, as well as polyphenols and other antioxidant compounds. These nutrients support cardiovascular health and help the body's defenses against oxidative and inflammatory stress. Regular walnut consumption fits naturally into dietary patterns associated with healthy brain aging.



Avocado

Healthy fats · Folate · Blood-vessel health

Avocados are rich in monounsaturated fats, along with fiber, folate, potassium, and carotenoids such as lutein. Unsaturated fats can support cardiovascular health when they replace saturated fats in the diet—and maintaining healthy blood vessels is important for delivering oxygen and nutrients to the brain.



Pumpkin Seeds

Magnesium · Zinc · Nervous-system function

Pumpkin seeds pack several nutrients important to the nervous system into a small serving, including magnesium, zinc, iron, protein, and unsaturated fats. Magnesium contributes to normal nerve function, while zinc and iron have important roles in normal cognitive and neurological processes.



Tomatoes [Learn](#)

Lycopene · Antioxidant defense · Healthy aging

Tomatoes are one of the richest dietary sources of lycopene, a powerful carotenoid antioxidant. Lycopene helps protect cells against oxidative stress, a process involved in aging throughout the body, including the brain. Cooking tomatoes—especially as tomato paste—makes lycopene easier for the body to absorb, making tomatoes a nutritious addition to this brain-supportive meal.



Lemon & Garlic [Learn](#)

Vitamin C · Plant compounds · Iron absorption

Lemon provides vitamin C and citrus flavonoids, while garlic supplies sulfur-containing plant compounds with antioxidant properties. There's also a useful nutritional partnership here: vitamin C from the lemon can increase absorption of plant-based iron from foods such as chickpeas, quinoa, kale, and pumpkin seeds.

Your Brain Can Change

New Choices. New Habits. A Renewed Mind.

Changing the way we eat can feel difficult because many of our food choices have been repeated for years. Over time, familiar situations can begin to trigger familiar responses almost automatically.

But our brain is not fixed.

The brain has a remarkable ability called neuroplasticity—its capacity to adapt and change with experience, learning, and repeated behavior. As we repeatedly practice a new response, the brain can strengthen the neural processes that support that behavior.

A healthier choice that feels difficult today can become easier with practice.

How to Build a New Food Habit

1. START SMALL

Choose one realistic change at a time. Small actions are easier to repeat, and repetition is what helps a new behavior become a habit.

2. CONNECT IT TO A CUE

Attach your new habit to something you already do. For example: “After breakfast, I’ll pack a healthy snack for later.”

3. MAKE THE HEALTHY CHOICE EASY

Shape your environment for success. Keep nourishing foods prepared, visible, and easy to reach when hunger or cravings arrive.

4. REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT

New habits take time. Each repetition gives your brain another opportunity to practice the new pattern until it begins to feel more natural.

5. KEEP GOING

A difficult meal or missed day doesn't undo your progress. Instead of giving up, return to the habit at your next opportunity.

Start with one.

What is one food habit you will begin changing today?

.....

.....

You Are Not Doing This Alone.

Changing a habit involves the brain—but for us, transformation is also spiritual. Scripture spoke of renewal long before we could observe the brain’s capacity to change:

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

— Romans 12:2 —

God invites us to surrender even the areas where we have struggled repeatedly. Our appetites, thoughts, and habits do not have to determine our future. We can ask Him for wisdom, self-control, strength, and the willingness to begin again.

**Science reminds us that the brain can change.
Faith reminds us that God works miracles.**

Caribbean Rice & Beans



55 mins



8–10 servings

Ingredients

- ☐ 2½ cups parboiled rice
- ☐ 1½ cups coconut milk
- ☐ 2½ cups vegetable broth
- ☐ 1 can pigeon peas & 1 can red peas
- ☐ 1 cup diced carrots
- ☐ 1 cup of diced pumpkin
- ☐ 1 large onion chopped
- ☐ 8 cloves garlic
- ☐ 2-inch piece of grated ginger
- ☐ 1 cup bell peppers & 1 scotch bonnet pepper
- ☐ Thyme, scallions, chadon beni (culantro) & parsley
- ☐ 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ☐ 1 tbsp all-purpose seasoning & 1 tsp salt

Directions

1. **Build the flavor:** In a large pot, sauté the onion, garlic, ginger, scallions, bell pepper, and carrots for 4–5 minutes, until fragrant.
2. **Season:** Add the thyme, chadon beni (culantro), parsley, all-purpose seasoning, brown sugar, and salt. Stir and cook for 2–3 minutes.
3. **Add beans & liquid:** Stir in the drained pigeon peas and red peas. Add the coconut milk and broth.
4. **Add the rice & pumpkin:** Add the rinsed and soaked rice and pumpkin, then stir. Place the whole scotch bonnet pepper on top. Do not cut it.
5. **Cook:** Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce the heat to low. Cover tightly and cook for 25–35 minutes, until the rice is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Avoid stirring repeatedly while the rice cooks.
6. **Rest & serve:** Turn off the heat and let the rice sit, covered, for 10 minutes. Remove the scotch bonnet pepper and thyme stems. Fluff gently with a fork and serve.





Pigeon Peas & Red Beans [Learn](#)

Folate · Fiber · Steady energy

Beans and peas provide plant protein, fiber, folate, iron, potassium, and other B vitamins and minerals. Their combination of fiber, protein, and complex carbohydrates provides slowly digested energy for the body and brain. Legumes are also specifically emphasized in MIND and Mediterranean-style dietary patterns associated with cognitive health.



Carrots & Pumpkin [Learn](#)

Carotenoids · Antioxidants · Cell protection

Their bright orange color comes largely from carotenoids such as beta-carotene. These plant compounds have antioxidant activity, and beta-carotene can be converted into vitamin A, which is important for normal cell function. Colorful vegetables also contribute to the variety of plant foods characteristic of brain-supportive dietary patterns.



Bell Peppers [Learn](#)

Vitamin C · Antioxidants · Iron absorption

Bell peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C along with carotenoids and other protective plant compounds. Vitamin C contributes to antioxidant defenses and also helps the body absorb plant-based iron from the peas and beans, making these foods a useful nutritional combination.



Garlic & Ginger [Learn](#)

Protective Compounds · Antioxidants · Healthy Aging

Garlic and ginger contain a variety of bioactive plant compounds with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These compounds help strengthen the overall protective quality of a plant-rich diet and complement foods that support cardiovascular and brain health.



Brain Bright Salad

 15 mins  4–6 servings

Ingredients

Salad

- ☐ 1 pack of fresh arugula
- ☐ 1 ripe mango, diced
- ☐ 1 cucumber, sliced or diced
- ☐ 4–6 radishes, thinly sliced
- ☐ 2 tbsp capers, drained
- ☐ 2–3 tbsp fresh culantro, finely chopped
- ☐ Pinch of salt & pepper

Dressing

- ☐ 3 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- ☐ 1 tbsp caper brine
- ☐ 2 tbsp finely chopped culantro
- ☐ 1 tbsp capers, finely chopped
- ☐ 1–2 tbsp water, as needed
- ☐ Pinch of salt
- ☐ Black pepper to taste

Directions

1. **Prepare the vegetables:** Wash and dry the arugula. Slice the radishes and cucumber, and dice the mango.
2. **Make the dressing:** In a small bowl, combine the rice wine vinegar, caper brine, culantro, chopped capers, salt, and pepper. Add a little water if you want a milder dressing.
3. **Build the salad:** Add the arugula, mango, cucumber, and radishes to a large bowl.
4. **Dress:** Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently until everything is lightly coated.
5. **Finish:** Sprinkle with additional capers and fresh culantro, then serve immediately.



Arugula & Radish [Learn](#)

Folate · Vitamin C · Protective plant compounds

Arugula and radishes are both rich in protective plant compounds. Arugula provides folate, vitamin K, vitamin C, and carotenoids, while radishes contain vitamin C and naturally occurring sulfur-containing compounds. Together, they add freshness, crunch, and a variety of phytochemicals that support a colorful, plant-rich eating pattern.



Mango & Cucumber [Learn](#)

Vitamin C · Carotenoids · Hydration

Mango provides vitamin C, beta-carotene, fiber, and polyphenols, while cucumber contributes water and refreshing crunch. Mango's carotenoids support normal cell function and antioxidant defenses, and cucumber helps add hydration and volume without making the meal heavy. Together, they create a bright, refreshing balance of sweetness and freshness.

Dairy-Free Sweet Potato Ice Cream



2½–4 hrs



6–8 servings

Prep: 15 mins | Roast: 60 mins | Freeze: 2 hrs

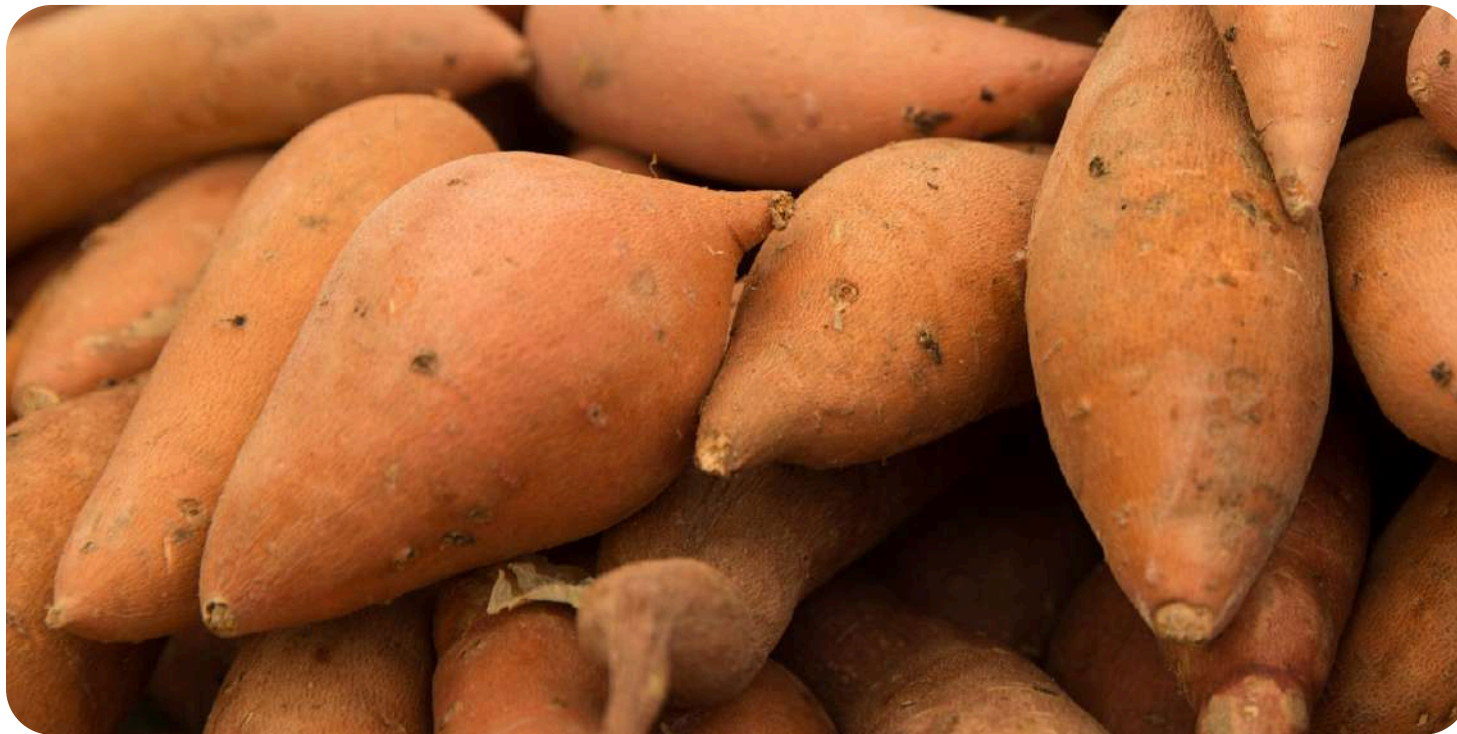
Ingredients

- 3 medium sweet potatoes
- 1½ cups full-fat coconut milk
- 1½ cups soaked cashews (optional)
- 5–8 Medjool dates, pitted and soaked
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Pecans, for topping

Directions

1. **Roast:** Bake the sweet potatoes at 400°F until very soft. Let them cool completely, peel, cut into chunks, and freeze.
2. **Blend:** Add the frozen sweet potato, coconut milk, dates, cashews, vanilla, lemon juice, and salt to a high-powered blender. Blend until completely smooth and creamy. Add a little more coconut milk only if needed to help it blend.
3. **Adjust sweetness:** Taste the mixture. If you want it sweeter, blend in the maple syrup.
4. **Serve or freeze:** Enjoy immediately for a soft-serve texture, or transfer to a container and freeze for 30–60 minutes for a firmer scoop.
5. **Finish:** Top with chopped pecans and serve.





Sweet Potatoes [Learn](#)

Carotenoids · Antioxidants · Steady Energy

Sweet potatoes are rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A, along with vitamin C, potassium, fiber, and other protective plant compounds. Their complex carbohydrates provide energy while fiber helps slow digestion. Orange vegetables also contribute carotenoids that help protect cells from oxidative stress and support overall brain and nervous-system health.



Coconut Milk [Learn](#)

Energy · Creaminess · Plant-Based Alternative

Coconut milk provides fat that gives this dessert its rich, creamy texture and helps the body absorb fat-soluble carotenoids from the sweet potatoes. Because coconut milk is relatively high in saturated fat, it is best enjoyed in moderation rather than highlighted as a brain-health food.



Dates [Learn](#)

Natural Sweetness • Fiber • Minerals

Dates provide natural sweetness along with fiber, potassium, magnesium, and polyphenols. Unlike refined sugar, whole dates retain fiber and a variety of micronutrients and plant compounds. They make a nutrient-rich way to sweeten this dessert while contributing to its overall plant-food diversity.



Lemon [Learn](#)

Vitamin C • Antioxidants • Freshness

Lemon provides vitamin C and citrus flavonoids, which contribute to the body's antioxidant defenses. Its acidity also brightens the natural sweetness of the sweet potatoes and dates, helping create a flavorful dessert with simple whole-food ingredients.



Pecans [Learn](#)

Healthy Fats · Vitamin E · Antioxidants

Pecans provide unsaturated fats, vitamin E, minerals, and polyphenols. Nuts are an important component of dietary patterns associated with cardiovascular and cognitive health. Their healthy fats also complement the carotenoid-rich sweet potatoes while adding satisfying crunch.



Cashews [Learn](#)

Healthy fats · Magnesium · Plant protein

Cashews provide unsaturated fats, plant protein, magnesium, copper, and other minerals that support normal body and nervous-system function. Their healthy fats contribute to satiety and help create the creamy texture of this dessert, while magnesium plays a role in normal nerve signaling and energy metabolism. As part of a balanced plant-based eating pattern, cashews can add both nutritional value and richness.

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Kale & Broccoli

dants, vitamin K, and
pounds that support



Walnuts

One of the best plant sources
fats, helping support memory
healthy brain aging.

Thank You

Thank you for being part of the Reframing the Brain Cooking Classes.

We hope you leave with more than new recipes. We hope you leave with greater confidence that small, intentional choices can nourish your brain, strengthen your body, and help build a healthier life.

Keep cooking. Keep learning. Keep connecting. And remember—you don't have to change everything at once. One healthy choice can be the beginning of something new.

May God give you strength for the journey ahead.