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WHEN A CULINARY DREAM TEAM announced they were raising money on Kickstarter to self-publish a biographical cookbook called *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life*, food world illuminati rushed to back the project, rallying around Paula as word spread of her dementia. In Part 1 of the following story, cookbook author **Peggy Knickerbocker** shares tales of the making of *Unforgettable* and Paula's influence on the country's culinary awakening. In Part 2, we distill the emerging science from the next frontier in food—the gut–brain connection—and share a plan for what to eat for better cognition, focus, and mental health. We conclude with a tool kit of resources for anyone who wants to know more about the aging brain. Why now? Paula's story inspired us to take a deeper look at Alzheimer's prevention and advocacy through the lens of food. Too much about the country's sixth-most fatal disease remains a mystery. A healthier diet is not a cure-all, but combined with sleep and exercise, it's a great place to start. As Knickerbocker writes about her friend's experience, "There's hope in taking charge." —HUNTER LEWIS

A RENEGADE'S LAST STAND
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CULINARY LEGEND **PAULA WOLFERT** FIGHTS A SPIRITED BATTLE AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S USING FOOD, FRIENDS, AND LAUGHTER AS MEDICINE.

STORY BY PEGGY KNICKERBOCKER PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC WOLFINGER

PAULA WOLFERT
at the enormous
kitchen island in
her home in the
hills above Sonoma,
California.



At age seven, after her grandparents moved to Manhattan, she ran away to their Midtown apartment by riding the subway. Her grandmother lovingly played along, “hiding” her in the basement and telling her she’d feed her onion sandwiches. (“They’ll smell me out!” the young Paula protested.) But that night Bertha took her back to Brooklyn. Concerned about her reckless behavior, her mother sent her to a preeminent psychiatrist, a relative, who told her parents, “She’s a renegade. Do not worry about her.”

EMILY KAISER THELIN, *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert’s Renegade Life*

THERE WAS PAULA Wolfert—queen of couscous, doyenne of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cooking, five-time James Beard Award-winning author—disembarking my long flight to Casablanca, Morocco. Paula was my Julia Child, M. F. K. Fisher, and Elizabeth David all wrapped into one, and I was standing beside her, by chance, in 1994, along with a couple hundred chefs and food writers. I, the newcomer to food writing, was charmed to be listening to her greet and gossip with her cohorts.

“Hey,” she said, squinting at my name tag. “We both write for the same magazine.” She immediately made me feel like a colleague. As the line inched along, we found we were neighbors in San Francisco, where she and her husband, best-selling crime novelist William “Bill” Bayer, had recently moved from Connecticut.

Back home, we became fast friends. From the first time I picked her up to go to a Spanish restaurant on Russian Hill, where we both lived, she was open and funny. I ate her words. I loved her upbeat energy, her inquisitiveness, her immediacy.

Since she didn’t drive, I took her grocery shopping and to the Ferry Plaza Farmers Market weekly. There, young chefs timidly approached her to extend an invitation to their fledgling restaurants. Farmers familiar with her proclivity for hard-to-find vegetables and herbs offered her uncommon green vegetables such as purslane and

PAULA REVIEWS a recipe from her seminal 1983 book *The Cooking of Southwest France*.

cardoons. Alice Waters invited her to dinners at Chez Panisse and parties at her house. “Why is everybody being so nice to me around here?” Paula, the former *New Yorker*, would ask. She sat on culinary panels where she shared generously and injected moments of much-needed humor when topics got too earnest. Scholars would debate the dire need for the use of mortars and pestles over food processors for making



pesto, for instance, or they might argue that a true Genovese pesto could only be made with the tiny leaves of basil from Liguria. Paula would say to use what we had on hand and not to take pesto making too seriously.

While she never nitpicked the size of a basil leaf, Paula went to painstaking lengths to document authentic recipes from the source. There was a gentle joke among her food writer friends that *Saveur* magazine had asked for 600 words on the *canelé de Bordeaux*, which she described as “a magical bakery confection, a cake with a rich custardy interior enclosed by a thin caramelized shell.” But Paula learned so much, having become friendly with a secret brotherhood of Bordeaux bakers, that she sent in thousands of words.

She sought “Big Taste . . . food that is deeply satisfying and that appeals to all the senses,” as described in *Paula Wolfert’s World of Food*. As we became close, we were both testing recipes for our cookbooks, my first and her fifth. I’ll never forget bringing her a taste of romesco. She put the roasted pepper sauce in her mouth, closed her eyes, and said, “Are you in love with the flavors? I mean madly in love?” If I hesitated, even for a second, she’d say, “Dump it.” The recipe stayed in *Olive Oil: From Tree to Table*. She was oblivious to the ways like this in which she helped my career. She’d never let me call her my mentor because it carried too much weight. Anointed by Paula, I was on a fast track to my master’s degree in gastronomic writing.

And then after a few years, yearning for a taste of country living, Paula and Bill bought a contemporary house in a wooded enclave above Sonoma. She’d had it with San Francisco’s hills, the wind and fog. She’d grown weary of all the dinners and lunches, the constant chatter about food. She was ready to make new friends who didn’t cook and to immerse herself in the politics of the Democratic party. I missed her terribly. Even if she was only an hour away, it wasn’t the same.

A DIAGNOSIS

[Bill Bayer] felt drawn to Paula’s strength, which belied her vulnerability. “She had children to support, and she’d made a career out of basically nothing,” he recalled. “She was a powerhouse. Aggressive, but not in an off-putting way. There was something about her eyes. There was a vulnerability in them, which was at odds with her brassy personality.”

EMILY KAISER THELIN, *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert’s Renegade Life*

ONE DAY in 2013, Paula told me her memory had been perilously slipping, so she’d gone in for tests.

I called to hear the outcome: It was as she’d suspected. Catherine Madison, MD, a San Francisco neurologist specializing in dementia and now director of the Ray Dolby Brain Health Center, detected mild cognitive impairment, a precursor to Alzheimer’s disease, in Paula’s MRI.

“I’m not one to feel sorry for myself,” Paula told me then. “Besides, I’d already done my homework and had been studying alternative treatments for dementia on the Web,” especially the work of Dale E. Bredesen, MD, of the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and UCLA’s Alzheimer’s research center. Paula immediately embarked on her own improvised dietetic therapy. In her research on the effects of nutrition on brain function, Paula contacted doctors who believed in the significance of nutritional therapies, not unlike Hippocrates, who around 400 B.C. said, “All disease begins in the gut.” She

made an appointment with a nutritionist, Sharon Meyer, an associate of Madison’s, who approved of Paula’s well-researched regimen. Paula read blogs and newsletters in support of her newly found dietary path. [See “A Tool Kit of Resources,” page 190.] Since no real cure has yet been discovered, Paula did what she knew best: She treated food as medicine.

Paula was never comfortable with physical exertion. In 2000, you would have thought she had run a marathon walking a few blocks from our hotel in Bologna, Italy, to the opening ceremony of a Slow Food conference. She begged for water, her face grew bright red, and she panted along the way. So when she told me recently she jogged daily for 30 minutes on a treadmill, I didn’t believe her. “Not only that,” she said, “I also take yoga and qigong classes, and I meditate.”

Paula also finds comfort in a social routine. She organized a local Memory Café (a spot for people with memory loss to support each other and socialize), and she meets weekly with six women for “Lunch Bunch.” She traveled to Washington, D.C., as a spokeswoman for the Alzheimer’s Association to discuss the importance of getting tested, taking medication to slow the cognitive decline, and speaking out for a cure. “You can’t be ashamed; you have to come out and fight,” Paula insisted. She treated her diagnosis with the same vigor she put forth when we traveled thousands of miles to Spain to track down the production of Bomba rice, the ideal grain for making paella. She was serious about slowing down the disease.

After the diagnosis, I put off visiting because of my own self-centered fear. I had some skin in the game, too: I’d seen my brilliant drama critic father’s debilitating demise as a result of Alzheimer’s in 1985, and that, too, of his rosy-cheeked Irish mother in the mid-’60s. I’d been in an intermittent state of alarm ever since about my brother’s and my chances of inheriting the gene.

Before too long, I called to make a date. She was her same enthusiastic

self—happy and dying to talk about her new regimen. It came as little surprise, as we ate our wild salmon and sautéed greens at an outdoor table on the square of Sonoma, that yes, her memory loss was apparent in that she couldn't remember names. But who cared? She remembered mine. Her skin glowed and she looked fit and healthy. As I drove home after an espresso and a tiny square of dark chocolate at her house, I felt uplifted. I was filled with a hope that verged on joy. It was a foggy day gone sunny. Instead of letting her news get me down, I felt emboldened: The fact that Paula created a program to outfox the odds of her diagnosis made me feel I could do it, too, if I got the same diagnosis one day. There's hope in taking charge.

ONE LAST BOOK

When we pulled up to the woman's suburban development, I was skeptical. But then the housekeeper, Malika, greeted us at the door dressed in a bright blue silk Berber tunic. "I think this is going to be good," Paula said. "You can tell she cares."

What followed was a master class in how Paula gets her recipes. In the kitchen, which was scented with Malika's freshly ground spices, Paula pulled out her notebook but didn't write much down; instead, she peppered Malika with questions: Where was her saffron from, her cumin, her almonds? And where was she from, and how had she learned so much about cooking? Malika opened up about her almonds but also her recent divorce, how before

she'd found this job she'd worked as a janitor at a school, her young son strapped to her back. Malika and Paula joked, they hugged. Paula gave her a tomato peeler as a thank-you gift. By the time the noodles steamed, they seemed like grandmother and granddaughter. Moreover, a kind of otherworldly, almost holy glow pulsed in the room. Paula started to cry. We all started to cry.

"That's how I wrote all of my books!" Paula said. "Hugging, kissing, and measuring spoons."

I suspect that Paula's cookbooks are so exceptional because she bonds with good food the way she bonds with her favorite people... The best dishes are synonymous with love itself.

EMILY KAISER THELIN, *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life*

LAST YEAR, the food world buzzed about a new biographical cookbook project called *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life*.

Turned down by 10 publishing houses, many of which told her Paula's time had passed, Emily Kaiser Thelin, a food writer and Paula's former editor at *Food & Wine*, launched a crowdfunding Kickstarter campaign. She banded together with photographer Eric Wolfinger, book designer Toni Tajima, and cookbook author Andrea Nguyen (who served as editor) to honor Paula's life and produce the book themselves. Some 1,112 backers donated more than \$91,000 to bring the project, to be released in the spring of 2017, to life.

The team culled iconic recipes from Paula's award-winning cookbooks (see "A Paula Wolfert Reader," page 174) and those in line with her current diet. They wanted to tell the incredible stories behind Paula's canon of cookbooks, to show how far ahead she had been. It was heartening that a younger generation felt the significance of Paula's life vital enough to preserve it in one final book, for all generations. "We wanted to showcase the timelessness and modernity of her recipes," Thelin told me. "We've all been inspired by Paula's depth of knowledge, her bravery about her medical situation, her humor and kindness. Everyone is somehow touched by Alzheimer's and our team is no different."

The project thrilled Paula. But there were days when she wished she didn't have to sift through her memory to answer questions, especially related to her illness or other unhappy topics. As she started to write the book, Thelin said she found it difficult to return to old interview transcripts, to see how vivid Paula's language was when she first started interviews in 2011 and how dementia had shrunk it in the ensuing years. "Sometimes interviews felt like a three-way conversation: me, Paula, and then dementia interrupting her train of thought," Thelin said.

On the photo shoots, Team Renegade prepared for anything, scaled back whenever necessary, and handled most of the cooking themselves. They shot at Wolfinger's studio in San Francisco instead of Paula's home because she felt too responsible as a host, making the team coffees, retrieving kitchen equipment, and offering dark chocolate snacks. At the studio, she could relax. Paula's hands sometimes remembered the movement of rolling couscous by hand even if she couldn't fully articulate how to do it, Nguyen said. Paula might have burnished her renegade reputation by living in Tangier, Morocco, in the late '50s—the dawn of the Beat Generation—and later, from 1972 to 1976, with her husband, Bill, and children from her first marriage, Leila and Nicholas. But she has always been



THE MEMORY WALL, a collage of Paula's favorite pictures from her career, is pinned to a wall in her office.

wise, too. The book details Paula's epic, off-the-beaten-path journeys around the Mediterranean and Middle East as well as her quest for mainstream solutions, at first, to her disease. After her initial diagnosis, she agreed to take Donepezil to enhance cognition, knowing the drug would neither slow the progression of dementia nor cure it.

BULLETPROOFS, GRITTIES, AND COOKIES

To confirm that her facsimiles tasted genuine, she roped in chef André Daguin's daughter Ariane as a tester, for some of the time while [Ariane] was a student at Barnard. In her exactitude, Paula taught her a

new way to cook and eat. To judge how much salt a cook should sprinkle onto duck breasts before searing them, Paula asked Ariane to season some herself and slid a piece of paper between Ariane's fingers and the meat to measure how much fell. "It was sometimes grueling," Ariane recalled. "Those dinners obliged me to go deep down, to learn how to analyze a dish technically. When she asked how it tasted, it wasn't enough for me to say 'good.' I had to learn to decide—not enough of this, too much of that, what was missing."

EMILY KAISER THELIN, *Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life*

PAULA'S Alzheimer's is between stages three and four, with moderate cognitive decline. She no longer really cooks. Her sense of taste and smell are diminished, so she makes simple lunches with grass-fed beef or omega 3-rich fish along with braised greens and a salad. For dinner, she blends her own nut, seed, and supplement-laced "gritties," the opposite of a smoothie (see recipe on page 184). She has scaled back on entertaining; when she does have guests, she prefers to serve simple, refreshing snacks, such as sliced watermelon, instead of multicourse feasts.

On a recent visit, she repeated her new routine when I reached her house. She made Bulletproof coffee, a concoction of filtered coffee, grass-fed butter, and specially formulated coconut oil said to increase the brain's focus and attentiveness. As if she was letting me in on a secret, Paula took me down to her basement to see her frozen stash of brain food. We descended, walking



FRIENDS and longtime collaborators
Emily Kaiser Thelin and Paula.

past a collection of handsome pots that Bill had made during a pottery-making interlude. Paula led me to a large, dedicated-to-health freezer to reveal pound-size bags of organic blueberries, wild-caught salmon, sardines, chia and flax seeds, and cashews and walnuts.

Upstairs in her high-ceilinged, bright kitchen with a wall of 100-odd clay pots and tagines, she removed from her fridge mounds of chard and kale along with an array of supplements, tinctures, coconut milk, and whatever else would go into her gritty that evening. Avocados were piled into a basket to ripen each day. Later that evening, Bill would grill himself a steak, and her son, Nick, would make his own dinner.

And then Paula went to bed, but not before she took a tiny bite of a marijuana cookie purchased from a licensed dispensary. It doesn't make her high, she said, it just relaxes her and helps her not wake in the middle of the night and grow restless. Sleep is an important part of her battle with Alzheimer's. The edibles, Thelin writes in *Unforgettable*, are "the only part not sanctioned by her

neurologist, as the treatment, though legal, is not yet approved by the FDA." Her only piece of picture identification these days, aside from her passport, is her medical marijuana card.

Paula starts her day over and does just what she did the day before. She lives in the moment and tries not to think about the future. Her short-term memory is failing, but she still recalls

stories, lots of stories. She reminded me of the day legendary chef Paul Bocuse was in town and she brought me to lunch to meet him. In my best French, I told him he looked trim and healthy and asked him his secret. "Do you remember what he said, Peggy?" she asked me, not waiting on the answer. "Oatmeal!"

The last visit I paid Paula was pretty much the same as before. I still didn't like the Bulletproof coffee, nor would I taste her gritty that she made. We went to a new Portuguese restaurant this time and then for coffee before returning to her house. I had ogled her clay pot collection for 26 years and wondered what would happen to it. As if she read my mind, she pulled down a sage green tagine and put it in my hands. I got teary understanding the implication: That part of her life was over. But I'd be along to share the next chapter, and the one after that with her.

"I want you to have it and cook with it while you still like to cook," she told me. And when I got home, I put it on a shelf in my kitchen. I pulled out her first book, *Couscous and Other Good Food from Morocco*, and chose a tagine of chicken, green olives, and preserved lemons to make the next day.

A PAULA WOLFERT READER

These five books will reward you with a world of big flavors and rich stories of the people and places behind them.

Unforgettable: Bold Flavors from Paula Wolfert's Renegade Life

Due out in spring 2017, this biography by Emily Kaiser Thelin shares Paula's classic recipes and chronicles the raconteur's career across the globe and up the food chain. Her fading memory doesn't loom sadly; it makes the book feel more alive and crackle with a sense of urgency.



The Food of Morocco

A celebration of a 50-year love affair with the country that inspired her first book and brought tagines and couscous into our home kitchens.

The Cooking of Southwest France

This 1983 book illuminated a then-undiscovered region, contributing to our fluency in dishes like confit and cassoulet.

Mediterranean Clay Pot Cooking

Paula got her first clay pot at age 19 and collected dozens more over the years. The recipes here capture the vessel's slow-simmered soul.

The Slow Mediterranean Kitchen

Full of relaxing, forgiving stews and braises to ward off "kitchen performance anxiety" brought on by a la minute dishes.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (BOOK COVER) COURTESY OF EMILY KAISER THELIN

WHAT TO FEED YOUR BRAIN
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MUCH DEPENDS ON WHAT YOU EAT, ESPECIALLY HOW YOU AGE, FEEL, AND FOCUS. SO WHY NOT **FEED YOUR BODY AND BRAIN WITH CLEAN, HIGH-OCTANE FUEL?** HERE'S HOW.

BY SIDNEY FRY, MS, RD, AND CAROLYN WILLIAMS, PHD, RD PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAIN BAGWELL



A **LZHEIMER'S DISEASE** is the most common form of dementia and the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States. It's a progressive, irreversible disorder in which the brain's nerve cells degenerate, causing problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Symptoms typically develop slowly, worsen over time, and interfere with daily tasks. Yes, genes are involved, but fewer than 5% of Alzheimer's cases are directly caused by genetics. The medical community has yet to identify a cause, and there is no effective long-term treatment. We do know this: The brains of Alzheimer's patients contain abnormal deposits of proteins, called amyloid plaques and tangles. The plaques build up around the brain's nerve cells while tangles form inside the cells, leading to blocked communication between brain cells and, eventually, cell death.

Determining what causes this buildup of plaques and tangles is key to finding a treatment. Two factors that appear to play a role are oxidative damage by free radicals and inflammation. Both of these are symptoms associated with the natural aging process, but they're also impacted by lifestyle. In addition, a lack of adequate blood flow due to brain cell death slowly limits healthy cells from getting the oxygen and glucose they need to function properly, and there's speculation that insulin resistance may be contributing to this (see "Type 3 Diabetes," page 179). Bottom line: Memory and cognition suffer. So what can you do now to start preventing mental decline? Focus on foods and habits that can boost your brain health.

15 BRAIN-BOOSTING FOODS

Researchers at Rush University Medical Center developed a diet that helped lower the risk of Alzheimer's by as much as 53% in study participants who followed it rigorously, and by as much as 35% in moderate followers. The MIND diet (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) is a blend of the Mediterranean and DASH diets (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) and includes foods from each that contain nutrients that appear to play key roles in brain health. Here, seven foods from the MIND diet (and the intakes associated with the most benefit), plus eight more on page 184 that could help keep you sharp.

1. Fish Eating fish like tuna and salmon once a week has been shown to slow decline in those with the Alzheimer's gene, thanks to the high content of omega-3 DHA fatty acid, which reduces oxidative stress and

slows plaque buildup. Low levels of omega-3 fatty acids in the diet have been associated with increased risk of depression and cognitive decline. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *At least 1 (4- to 6-ounce) serving per week*

2. Blueberries MIND researchers focused fruit intake solely on berries, all of which are packed with antioxidants. Blueberries' levels lead the list, appearing to help protect sensitive brain cells from harmful free radicals. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *At least 2 cups per week*

3. Nuts Walnuts are a top nut for brain health, but all nuts offer potential brain benefits thanks to the powerful combo of omega-3s, vitamin E, and antioxidants. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *1 ounce at least 5 days a week*

4. Beans These are natural brain boosters, containing B vitamins and phytochemicals as well as a good supply of glucose, the brain's top fuel source. The brain can't store glucose, so it relies on a steady supply of it from the body, which beans can provide. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *Include with 4 or more meals a week*

5. Dark Leafy Greens Eating them may be one of the best ways to maintain proper brain function and to slow dementia development. They're packed with folate and phytochemicals, both of which have been linked to a lower risk of mental decline. Folate deficiency is associated with depression and possible cognitive impairment. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *At least 6 cups weekly*

6. Extra-Virgin Olive Oil This contains oleocanthal, which boosts the production of key enzymes that help break down the plaques associated with Alzheimer's. A study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found that olive oil improved learning and memory by reversing oxidative damage in the brains of mice. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *Use often*

7. Wine Several studies link moderate alcohol intake with improved memory and possibly even lower Alzheimer's risk—moderation being key. Red wine may offer even more brain benefits due to resveratrol, a compound in red grapes that may help reduce amyloid buildup in the brain. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *No more than 1 glass a day*

FOOD STYLING: TORIE COX; PROP STYLING: AMY STONE



...
The relationship between gut bacteria and brain health is a new research area with lots of unknowns (see "Healthier Gut=Healthier Brain," page 188), but polyphenols in red wine do appear to nourish good-for-you bifidobacteria in the gut.

...
A 2014 study from the University of Pittsburgh found that people who eat fish of any type on a weekly basis have larger gray matter volumes in the brain—the area responsible for memory and speech—than those who don't.

...
A 2015 study found that people who ate one to two servings of leafy greens per day had the mental abilities of someone 11 years younger than those who ate none.

**Brain Power
Combo Plate**
Recipes p. 182

TYPE 3 DIABETES

There's a strong connection between Alzheimer's and diabetes: Studies have shown that people who have type 2 diabetes may be twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's, potentially due to insulin resistance. Some scientists even refer to Alzheimer's as type 3 diabetes. According to experts at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, type 2 diabetes is almost always preventable through exercise and diet. Whether you have type 2 diabetes or not, the current consensus is that all individuals should try to reduce insulin resistance. The best way to do this? Limit added sugars, refined carbs, and processed foods; eat balanced meals that focus on lean protein and vegetables; and be active.

GLOSSARY

Alzheimer's Disease A type of dementia that causes problems with memory, thinking, and behavior due to a degeneration of brain cells. Symptoms typically develop slowly, worsen over time, and interfere with daily tasks.

Amyloid Plaques These are abnormal deposits of proteins that build up around brain cells in people with Alzheimer's, disrupting communication between cells and leading to cell death.

Tangles These are abnormal protein formations inside the brain cells of people with Alzheimer's that disrupt the communication between cells and contribute to cell death.

Antioxidants These compounds occur naturally in foods and help prevent or stop damage caused by oxidants. Oxidants are free radicals created by the body during natural processes. Antioxidants clear these unwanted free radicals from the body.

Oxidative Stress This is damage caused by an imbalance of too many free radicals and not enough antioxidants in the body; some oxidative stress is part of the natural aging process, but other oxidative stress can cause damage that is thought to lead to the development of cancer, heart disease, and Alzheimer's, as well as other diseases.

Insulin Resistance A condition in which the body produces insulin but does not use it effectively, causing a buildup of glucose in the blood. Untreated insulin resistance can lead to type 2 diabetes and may play a role in Alzheimer's.

GET SOME SLEEP

Lack of quality sleep increases levels of the protein that forms amyloid plaques, which in turn disrupts sleep patterns further. Make a point to get adequate sleep, and readjust your sleep patterns after deprivation or interruptions. "This is valuable time where the brain rids itself of collected debris. I like to say that this is where the janitor comes in and cleans after a busy day at the office," says Rebecca Katz, MS, author of *The Healthy Mind Cookbook*.



PAN-SEARED SALMON WITH PEAR AND WALNUT SPINACH SALAD

Active: 30 min. Total: 30 min.

Wild salmon has less saturated fat, fewer calories, and 5 to 10 times fewer contaminants and persistent organic pollutants (POPs) than farm-raised (in early studies, POPs have been linked to impaired brain development, type 2 diabetes, and obesity). There's no need to give up all farmed salmon, and eating some is always better than none. Aim to eat at least 1 to 2 servings of omega-3-rich fatty fish weekly.

- 1/4 cup toasted walnuts, divided
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 oz. grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese (about 1/4 cup), divided
- 1 1/2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tsp. honey
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. water
- 1 tsp. minced fresh garlic
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4 (6-oz.) wild salmon fillets (about 1 in. thick)
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 4 cups baby kale
- 4 cups baby spinach
- 1 cup thinly sliced ripe pear

1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Finely chop or grind 2 tablespoons walnuts. Combine finely chopped walnuts, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons cheese, and next 5 ingredients (through 1 teaspoon water) in a small bowl. Add garlic and 1/4 teaspoon salt, stirring with a whisk.
3. Sprinkle salmon with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over high. Add remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons oil to pan; swirl to coat. Add salmon, skin side down; cook 3 minutes or until skin begins to brown, gently pressing fillets. Place pan in oven (salmon should still be skin side down). Bake for 4 to 5 minutes or until desired degree of doneness.

4. Combine kale, spinach, and pear in a large bowl. Add 4 tablespoons dressing; toss to coat. Divide kale mixture evenly among 4 plates, and sprinkle evenly with remaining 2 tablespoons cheese and remaining 2 tablespoons walnuts. Top each salad with 1 fillet. Drizzle fillets evenly with remaining dressing.

✓ SERVES 4 (serving size: 1 fillet and about 2 cups salad)
CALORIES 427; **FAT** 22.5g (sat 4.4g, mono 10g, poly 6.7g);
PROTEIN 44g; **CARB** 15g; **FIBER** 4g; **SUGARS** 7g
(est. added sugars 3g); **CHOL** 89mg; **IRON** 3mg;
SODIUM 571mg; **CALC** 225mg



CHICKPEA-FARRO SALAD

Active: 10 min. Total: 10 min.

Diets higher in whole grains have been linked to lower levels of inflammation and cognitive decline; whole grains are a staple in the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. This salad combines brain-boosting farro, chickpeas, and olive oil with the bright crunch of fresh celery. Simple, quick, and delicious.

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. minced shallots
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup cooked farro
- 1 cup canned organic chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped celery leaves

1. Combine first 5 ingredients in a large bowl, stirring well with a whisk. Add remaining ingredients; toss to coat.

✓ SERVES 4 (serving size: about 2/3 cup)
CALORIES 171; **FAT** 8g (sat 1g, mono 5.1g, poly 1.1g);
PROTEIN 4g; **CARB** 21g; **FIBER** 4g; **SUGARS** 2g
(est. added sugars 0g); **CHOL** 0mg; **IRON** 1mg;
SODIUM 347mg; **CALC** 34mg

8 MORE BRAIN BOOSTERS

ORANGE-MANGO GRITTY WITH TURMERIC AND WALNUTS

Active: 10 min. **Total:** 10 min.

Here's our take on Paula Wolfert's daily "gritty" (see page 173)—the opposite of a smoothie thanks to all the nuts, seeds, and spices. The walnut-flaxseed combination adds 2,000mg omega-3s to this satisfying sip, along with a pleasantly nutty balance to the sweet mango and bright citrus. Yogurt lends tangy, good-for-the-gut probiotics, and fresh turmeric adds a bright, peppery zing. Some researchers say the curcumin in fresh turmeric is more bioavailable than dried, as some essential oils and pungency are lost in the drying process. We love it for its brighter, livelier flavor. If you can't find fresh root (a close relative to gingerroot), substitute ½ teaspoon dried turmeric.

¾ cup plain 2% reduced-fat Greek yogurt

1 cup ice cubes

¾ cup chopped peeled ripe mango, frozen

½ cup fresh orange slices

¼ cup chopped toasted walnuts

¼ cup fresh orange juice

1 Tbsp. ground flaxseed

2 tsp. grated fresh turmeric

Dash of kosher salt

Freshly grated nutmeg (optional)

1. Place first 9 ingredients in a blender; process 1 minute or until almost smooth. Divide mixture evenly between 2 glasses. Sprinkle with nutmeg, if desired.

🍷 **SERVES 2** (serving size: about 1¼ cups)

CALORIES 245; **FAT** 13.1g (sat 2.3g, mono 1.7g, poly 8g); **PROTEIN** 11g; **CARB** 25g; **FIBER** 4g; **SUGARS** 19g (est. added sugars 0g); **CHOL** 6mg; **IRON** 1mg; **SODIUM** 91mg; **CALC** 109mg

8. Green Tea This antioxidant-rich beverage appears to be one of the best ways to keep the brain hydrated thanks to the compounds called catechins. Not only do catechins appear to be some of the most effective antioxidants in preventing free radical damage, but some research suggests they can help block amyloid plaque formation.

SUGGESTED INTAKE Drink regularly

9. Coffee Harvard researchers found that people who drink 3 to 5 cups of coffee (caffeinated or decaf) a day may have a lower risk of developing neurological diseases and type 2 diabetes. Coffee lovers can thank chlorogenic acid, a compound in coffee that acts as an anti-inflammatory and decreases cells' insulin resistance. Caffeine also blocks adenosine, a chemical that inhibits the activity of nerve cells; several studies correlate caffeine intake with higher scores on memory tests.

SUGGESTED INTAKE Less than 4 cups a day

10. Dark Chocolate The satisfying, bittersweet bite is rich in flavonoids, which help create neurons and have been shown to improve cognitive function. It also encourages the release of endorphins, which elevate your mood. For maximum flavonoid benefit, choose a dark chocolate that contains 60% cacao or higher. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** Enjoy a 1-ounce treat occasionally

11. Fermented Foods The exact impact that our gut microbes have on the brain is unclear (see "Healthier Gut=Healthier Brain" on page 188), but adding bacteria diversity with diet is one of the best ways to encourage a healthy gut. Do this by eating more probiotics, prebiotics, and fermented foods, such as yogurt, kimchi, kombucha, miso, and sauerkraut. Fermented foods also contain high concentrations of vitamin K, which may be a factor in slowing the development of Alzheimer's because of its key role in the synthesis of important lipids.

SUGGESTED INTAKE Eat several times a week

12. Turmeric This vibrant yellow spice from India is gaining popularity in alternative medicine. It contains a compound called curcumin, which not only gives the root its bright orange-yellow hue but also lends a distinctly earthy, peppery flavor to curry powders. In a 2012 Ohio State University study, curcumin reduced amyloid accumulation in the brains of middle-aged subjects. Residents of India have low rates of Alzheimer's, a statistic that some associate with the region's high levels of turmeric intake. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** Incorporate 1 or 2 turmeric dishes (such as curry) a week





13. Foods Rich in B Vitamins Low levels of folate and B₁₂ are associated with increased risk for Alzheimer's and dementia. Some studies suggest that taking supplements of these vitamins may actually slow brain deterioration, but more data are needed. Eating foods

rich in folate and B₁₂ is an easy way to protect your brain: Make sure you're getting lots of greens, whole grains, and lean protein, including shellfish (like clams, see page 188). **SUGGESTED INTAKE**

These foods have loads of other benefits; should be diet staples

14. Eggs High in protein and low in calories (6g protein and 70 calories per large egg), eggs are also a good source of vitamin D and choline, two nutrients key for brain health. It's estimated up to 75% of us don't get enough vitamin D—a scary fact in light of a recent study that found that older adults who were moderately deficient in vitamin D had a 53% increased risk of developing Alzheimer's. Choline helps stimulate neurotransmitters and regulate metabolism. **SUGGESTED INTAKE** *Up to 1 a day for healthy adults; up to 3 a week for those with heart disease or diabetes*

AVOID BRAIN DRAINERS

Adding brain-boosting foods is only part of why many think the MIND diet had such powerful results. Decreasing brain drainers may have just as much (or more) impact on Alzheimer's risk.

Butter and Stick Margarine
(less than 1 Tbsp. a day)

Red Meat
(less than 4 meals a week)

Cheese
(less than 1 serving a week)

Fast Food
(0-1 times a week)

Baked Goods and Sweets
(less than 5 servings a week)

Fried Foods
(0-1 servings a week)

TUNA, EGG, AND AVOCADO TOAST

Active: 15 min. Total: 15 min.

- 8 oz. canned or jarred sustainable albacore tuna packed in oil
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil, divided
- 2 Tbsp. minced red onion
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 hard-cooked large eggs, coarsely chopped
- 4 (1-oz.) slices crusty whole-grain bread, toasted
- 3/4 cup thinly sliced avocado
- 1/2 cup baby arugula

1. Drain tuna, reserving 2 tablespoons oil. Combine tuna, reserved oil, celery, 3 tablespoons basil, and next 5 ingredients (through black pepper) in a medium bowl; toss to coat. Fold in eggs. Top each bread slice with about 3 tablespoons avocado, 2 tablespoons arugula, and 3/4 cup tuna mixture. Garnish toasts with remaining 1 tablespoon basil.

✂ SERVES 4 (serving size: 1 toast)
CALORIES 333; **FAT** 19.3g (sat 3.3g, mono 10.7g, poly 3.8g); **PROTEIN** 23g; **CARB** 17g; **FIBER** 4g; **SUGARS** 3g (est. added sugars 1g); **CHOL** 111mg; **IRON** 2mg; **SODIUM** 586mg; **CALC** 59mg



15. Coconut Oil This plant oil is rich in medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs), a type of fat that may boost ketone levels. One theory holds that ketones may be a substitute energy source for glucose when brain cells become insulin resistant due to Alzheimer's. No research has proven the brain-boosting benefits of coconut oil, though anecdotal testimonials abound about the efficacy of Bulletproof

(see page 190), a coffee blend with a coconut oil derivative and butter said to increase alertness and focus.

SUGGESTED INTAKE *Coconut oil is predominantly saturated fat, and sat fat has been linked to an increased dementia risk. There's also no evidence that MCTs in coconut oil have an impact on brain health. However, several clinical trials looking at potential effects on dementia and Alzheimer's are currently being conducted, so stay tuned.*

HEALTHIER GUT = HEALTHIER BRAIN

Once considered an outlandish theory in alternative medicine, research now shows that gut bacteria communicate with the brain to influence metabolism, insulin response, mood, and behavior. Scientists call this the gut microbiome-brain axis, and the gut-brain relationship may be a huge factor in health.

While more research is needed, we do know that the typical American diet (refined foods, added sugars) disrupts the microbe balance in the gut and promotes inflammation in the body. It's this inflammatory imbalance that may be at the root of type 2 diabetes, depression, obesity, heart disease, and dementia. Populations with more diverse guts (like those found in people with a diet low in processed foods and high in fruits, vegetables, and fish) appear to have a lower prevalence of these conditions. This suggests that a nutritional approach may prevent, slow, or halt the progression of the disease. Much more research is needed (and underway) to hopefully provide a better understanding of the gut-brain relationship and how it impacts health.

GARLICKY STEAMED CLAMS

Active: 20 min. Total: 25 min.

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped shallots
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dry white wine
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup clam juice
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh thyme
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. crushed red pepper
- $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb. small clams in shells (such as Manila or littleneck), scrubbed
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped fresh parsley
- 4 (1-oz.) slices crusty whole-grain bread and 4 lemon wedges

1. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium. Add garlic and shallots; cook 8 minutes or until shallots are soft. Increase heat to medium-high. Add wine, clam juice, thyme, and red pepper; bring to a boil. Boil 3 minutes. Add clams; cover and cook 4 to 5 minutes or until shells open. Discard any unopened shells. Stir in butter and parsley; serve with bread and lemon wedges.

Y SERVES 4 (serving size: about 9 clams, about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup liquid, and 1 bread slice)

CALORIES 289; **FAT** 14.5g (sat 4.9g, mono 6.7g, poly 1.7g); **PROTEIN** 13g; **CARB** 19g; **FIBER** 3g; **SUGARS** 3g (est. added sugars 1g); **CHOL** 39mg; **IRON** 2mg; **SODIUM** 557mg; **CALC** 89mg

GET OUT AND GET MOVING

PHYSICAL “Exercise actually promotes the growth of new brain cells, and this is most aggressively seen in the brain’s memory center,” says David Perlmutter, MD, neurologist and author of *Grain Brain*. “While stretching and weight training are great ideas, the science that shows exercise is good for the brain has focused on aerobics. As little as 20 minutes a day turns out to be associated with an almost 50% reduction in Alzheimer’s risk.”

How much physical exercise is ideal for keeping your brain healthy? “Aim for 40 minutes, three times each week,” recommends Neal Barnard, MD, founder and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. “Aerobic exercise has been associated with an increase in the size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain that is central to memory.”

MENTAL Don’t forget mental exercise, too. Experts believe activities such as meditation and learning a new skill

are important to brain health and longevity. New programs such as BrainHQ have been designed recently to challenge and train the brain (more online resources below).

What’s more, Barnard advocates combining physical and cognitive exercise for increased benefits. “New research shows participating in physical exercise four hours after you learn new material may help you recall the information at a higher rate,” Barnard says.

SOCIAL Make interacting with others a priority as well. Paula Wolfert plans weekly social activities such as lunches on Tuesday and video chats with a group of fellow dementia advocates on Thursday. She visits the Sonoma farmers market twice a week.

“Having a sense of community and purpose may be the most important component in health and longevity,” says Rebecca Katz, MS, author of *The Healthy Mind Cookbook*.

A TOOL KIT OF RESOURCES

If you think you or someone you know has symptoms of dementia, consult a neurologist to tailor a plan of action. The links below, including recommendations from Paula Wolfert, will help you stay abreast of the latest developments on dementia and cognitive function.

Alzheimer’s News Today

Keep current on the latest studies and news developments on brain health. alzheimersnewstoday.com

alz.org (and alzheimersblog.org)

Find resources and support groups for local branches of the Alzheimer’s Association, the leading nonprofit advocacy group.

alzforum.org A news site that publishes and archives the latest scientific papers on the disease.

brainhq.com A relatively new brain training site with personalized courses and challenges backed by research studies.

The Caregiver Action Network

Tips and forums for all types of caregiving situations. caregiveraction.org

dementiajourney.org Practical and

heartfelt advice for caring for loved ones with memory loss.

fourhourworkweek.com For creative approaches to productivity and mental alertness, Paula follows the blogs and podcasts of Timothy Ferriss.

time.com/tag/longevity News stories about the challenges we face later in life as we live longer.

bulletproofexec.com Paula Wolfert’s daily routine inspired *Cooking Light* staffers to try Bulletproof coffee, a fuel for the Silicon Valley set. We blended 8 ounces of hot filtered coffee with 1 tablespoon Kerrygold grass-fed butter and 1 teaspoon XCT oil (derived from coconut oil, see page 188) per serving. It made us feel much more alert than regular black coffee and staved off hunger, too.

WHAT THE BRAIN EXPERTS EAT

David Perlmutter, MD

Neurologist and author of *Grain Brain*

BREAKFAST I often skip it.

LUNCH My first meal is typically around noon, favoring lots of colorful, above-ground vegetables and a protein source like free range eggs or wild fish, with everything covered in lots of organic, extra-virgin olive oil.

DINNER Usually similar. I consume fermented foods daily. I really like kimchi, a traditional Korean fermented cabbage that’s loaded with probiotic bacteria. I also eat a good source of prebiotic fiber each day to nurture gut bacteria. This may be jicama, dandelion greens, asparagus, onions, garlic, or artichokes.

Rebecca Katz, MS

Author of *The Healthy Mind Cookbook*

BREAKFAST I don’t get hungry until about 10 a.m., so I start with hot water and lemon, move on to black coffee, then I might have some sheep’s yogurt with blueberries and chopped nuts.

LUNCH By 10, I’m eating a cup of soup. If I have a frittata in the fridge from the weekend, I’ll nibble on that.

DINNER Depending on the season, it might be a steak salad, a curry, or soup—all accompanied by lots of vegetables. I also keep myself hydrated with herbal tea, green tea, and infused waters.

Neal Barnard, MD

Founder and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

BREAKFAST Blueberry buckwheat pancakes or steel-cut oats with fresh fruit, nuts, and seeds

LUNCH A Tuscan vegetable wrap or a leafy green salad with vegetables and beans

DINNER Stuffed bell peppers with squash, black beans, and rice; or sweet potato burritos

DESSERT Banana ice cream or a black bean brownie, made with dates and jam