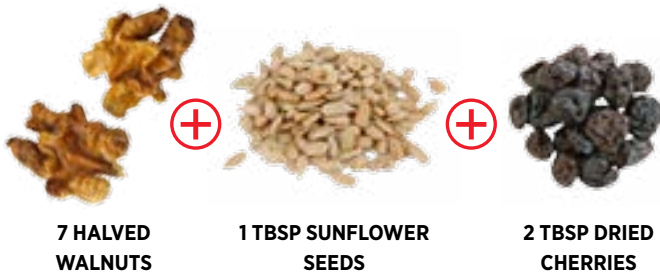


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Eat your way to a sharper mind with these nutrient-packed mini meals. BY MALLORY CREVELING



= QUICK THINKING The ingredients in this homemade trail mix burst with anti-inflammatory agents that improve brain function. Omega-3 fatty acids in walnuts have also been shown to boost learning and memory, and their vitamin E shields cells from damage caused by free radicals, explains Jennifer McDaniel, RDN, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



= CONCENTRATION CURE “Chickpeas are rich in B vitamins, which help reduce brain cell shrinkage and offer up a slow yet steady source of carbs to keep your mind focused,” says McDaniel. The spice adds an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory kick to enhance brain performance and fight Alzheimer’s. Drain the chickpeas, toss them with turmeric and oil, spread out on a baking sheet and bake at 425° for at least 15 minutes—longer if you want more crunch. You’ll get three ½-cup servings.



= TOTAL RECALL Choline, an essential nutrient found in yolks, is key to maintaining memory because it encourages clear communication between brain cells. Eggs also have vitamin D, a necessity for neural function, explains David Perlmutter, MD, author of *Brain Maker*. For more zing and extra support for cell growth, McDaniel suggests mixing the yolk with horseradish.



= BETTER PROCESSING Thanks to blueberries’ potent flavonoids, eating at least one ½-cup serving a week of this superfood delays mental aging by up to two and a half years, according to research. The yogurt (look for one with less than 10 grams of sugar per serving) provides potassium, to improve blood flow, and probiotics, which promote healthy belly bacteria and protect the gut’s lining. “When this layer is damaged, chemicals can escape and cause inflammation, which the brain is very sensitive to,” says Perlmutter.



= CLEAR COGNITION High in good-for-you monounsaturated fat, avocados increase blood flow to the brain, says McDaniel. Whole grains make the perfect pair, since they supply an anti-inflammatory punch plus B vitamins, such as thiamin, which battle mental decline.