

Eat these to keep your memory sharp

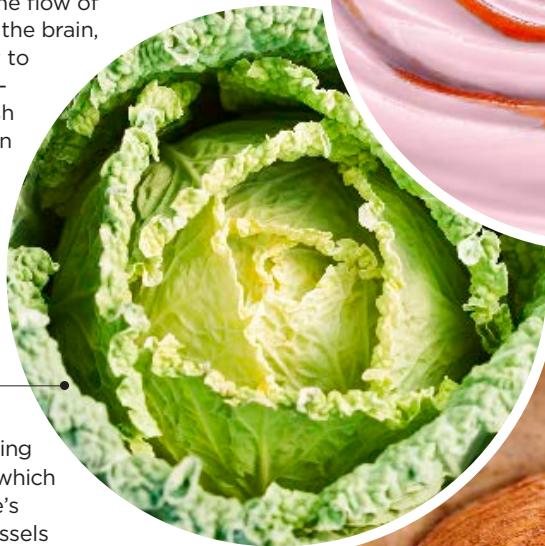
Hoping to one day be a brilliant, feisty granny who never misses a beat? Put these tasty brain boosters on your daily menu and you will be. BY MARYGRACE TAYLOR

EXPERTS:

Marisa Moore, registered dietitian, Atlanta; Matthew J. Kuchan, Ph.D., senior nutrition scientist at the health-care company Abbott

BLUEBERRIES

One long-term study of more than 16,000 women found that those who ate the most blueberries (and strawberries) had the minds of people roughly two years younger. This could be because the bite-size fruits are full of antioxidants like flavonoids and anthocyanins, which are thought to increase the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the brain, says Moore. One way to help reach your cup-a-day goal: Gently crush fresh or thawed frozen blueberries with a fork and spread them on whole-grain toast in place of your usual jam.



CABBAGE

Studies show that eating cruciferous veggies (which also include cabbage's cousins broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and kale) may be linked to lower rates of Alzheimer's disease and mental deterioration. It might be, in part, because they're packed with compounds called glucosinolates that appear to play a role in fighting forgetfulness, Kuchan says. Aim to get at least two cups per week—and avoid overcooking them to preserve the most nutrients. Try quick-sautéed cabbage and chopped apples tossed with olive oil and balsamic vinegar, one of Moore's favorite dishes.

LOW-FAT YOGURT

A cup of fortified yogurt packs about 20 percent of your daily vitamin D—which is a tidbit worth keeping in mind, since studies show that too-low levels of the nutrient can be linked to cognitive decline.

Experts are still learning why that is, but it's possible that vitamin D strengthens connections between brain cells to help your brain function more effectively, explains Kuchan. Since not all yogurt is fortified, make sure vitamin D is on the ingredient list before tossing a few cups into your grocery cart.



ALMOND BUTTER

Loading up on five or more servings of nuts per week could improve your memory, according to a study in *The Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging*. Almonds in particular are packed with vitamin E, which is believed to fight oxidative damage in the brain that occurs naturally with age, says Kuchan. So why almond butter? It's as versatile as the LBD hanging in your closet: Add two tablespoons (one serving) to puréed soups (like butternut squash) to create a rich, creamy texture; slather it over a sweet potato; or spoon it over banana slices and mini dark chocolate chips for a guilt-free dessert.

