

RESOURCES

Superfoods

There are many lists of “superfoods,” known as the healthiest of all foods to eat. Most of these lists overlap with nuts, seeds, many vegetables, avocados, and berries taking center stage. I compiled the following list from several of the authors cited in this book, especially the list of superfoods from Daniel Amen in his books, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life* (2015) and *Memory Rescue* (2017). I have organized this list into sections for you to choose your foods from. You could eat only the foods listed here and have a nice variety in your diet and achieve optimal health from the nutrition dimension.

I have only included foods that are commonly known and widely available. There are recognized superfoods that are exotic, and some can only be found as supplements. Since these are not necessary for an

optimal diet, I have excluded them to avoid excessive costs and keep a superfood diet accessible to everyone.

There are good and healthy foods not listed here and you may eat them for a healthy diet. The most important thing to remember is to strive to eat only the foods of nature in their healthy natural state; organic is preferable. Avoid processed foods whenever you can.

Nuts and Seeds

Tree nuts are the only foods that scientific studies have shown to prevent both cancer and heart disease. Each of the nuts listed here contains different minerals and other nutrients. Having several of these types every week, and eating some nuts every day if you can, is recommended.

Eat these nuts raw and organic if possible. Dry roasting nuts change the healthy fat into a trans-fat, eliminating much of the healthy nutrition. Also, do not buy these nuts salted to avoid the excessive consumption of salt.

Peanuts are not a nut but a legume and while peanuts have some health benefits, they are not a superfood.

The first three nuts below are the ones I use most commonly in my morning bowl.

Almonds – contain healthy fats, protein, and fiber.

Walnuts – along with healthy fats, including omega-3 fatty acids and fiber, contains Vitamin E, selenium, magnesium, and other antioxidants.

Brazil nuts – these are so high in selenium that only 4-6 nuts should be eaten daily. That is good since they are more expensive than other tree nuts. They also contain zinc, magnesium, thiamine, healthy fat, and fiber.

Pecans – similar to walnuts.

Cashews – a fruit-nut rich in phosphorus, magnesium, zinc, and antioxidants.

Macadamia nuts – high in healthy fats and lower in protein than other nuts listed here.

Seeds rank up with tree nuts as superfoods for a great source of healthy fats including omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, and protein. The following four seeds are widely available and make a great addition to many foods, including your morning bowl. Like tree nuts, the various seeds have different nutrients so look for all of them at different times.

Flaxseed – a layer of these goes into my bowl every morning. Use ground flaxseed since we cannot digest the shell of the seed.

Chia seeds – the energy food of the great long-distance runners of Mexico, the Tarahumara (read *Born to Run* by

Christopher McDougall). Chia seeds are now widely available in the United States.

Hemp seeds – from the hemp plant, rich in protein, healthy fats, fiber, and vitamins. The seeds have no cannabis.

Sesame seeds – despite their simple and pale appearance, these tiny seeds are a rich source of copper, manganese, and other nutrients.

Vegetables

Your daily vegetables should be multi-colored with green being the most important. There are two types of common vegetable superfoods, cruciferous and leafy. There is much overlap between these two categories.

The cruciferous vegetable superfoods include **Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Cauliflower, Horseradish, Radish, and Turnips.**

Broccoli deserves special mention because of its role in DNA methylation, a process of bodily repair, brain health and cancer prevention. Broccoli should be eaten as often as possible. If you do not like broccoli, remember the expression, “There is no such thing as a food you do not like, only foods you do not like yet!” Learn to like what is most healthy.

The green leafy vegetable superfoods include **Arugula, Spinach, Kale, Swiss chard, Watercress, Onions, Cabbage, and Collard greens.**

Asparagus does not fit into either of these categories of vegetable, but it is one of the best superfood vegetables.

Legumes are a controversial group of vegetables that are healthy for some and toxic for others. As pointed out by Dr. Steven Gundry in his popular book, *The Plant Paradox* (HarperCollins, 2017), legumes are loaded with lectins used by plants to avoid being eaten. These lectins are inflammatory to some people. These include beans and nightshade vegetables such as tomatoes and eggplant. Be mindful if these vegetables give you acne, rosacea, fatigue, or other symptoms, and avoid them if they do or prepare them as recommended by Dr. Gundry. If they do not bother you, they may be among your superfoods. The Blue Zones all consume legumes, and Dr. John Day, who I follow (www.drjohnday.com), credits legumes as being among the most important foods for healthy longevity.

Fruit

Berries are leading fruits on the superfood list because of their many antioxidants and fiber for our microbiome. **Blueberries, Blackberries, Raspberries** and **Strawberries** are all superfoods. There are other more exotic superfood berries from around the world such as **Acai berries, Goldenberry, and Gogi berries.** Have your berries fresh or frozen whenever possible.

Dried berries usually have too much sugar and should be eaten sparingly.

Kiwi and **Pomegranates** are superfood fruits.

Vegetables grow in the ground and fruits grow in trees. Hence, **avocado** is actually a fruit and one of the healthiest foods you can eat because it is filled with healthy fats and protein. Eat one or more avocados every week.

Because most fruits are high in sugar, they are best eaten whole and limited to 2-3 daily. All fruit juice is to be avoided because of the high sugar content. Whole fruits such as oranges, other citrus, peaches, plums, prunes, bananas, and melons are okay to eat but do not rise to the nutrient level of superfoods.

Oils

Olives and **Coconut** are healthy fruits found in different parts of the world and are most known for their healthy oils. **Extra virgin olive oil** is a mainstay of the Mediterranean diet, while **coconut oil** is enjoyed in Asia. These healthy fruits and oils help explain why 3 of the 5 Blue Zones are in the Mediterranean (Ikaria and Sardinia) and in Asia (Okinawa). Cook with coconut oil since it remains stable in the skillet while olive oil breaks down into a trans-fat. **Grapeseed** and **Avocado** also provide superfood oils.

Animal Products

We humans have been omnivores (eating plants and animals) since the beginning of the human species. We should eat mostly plants, and that is why these foods are listed first. The only required nutrient that comes from animals is Vitamin B12, and vegetarians need to supplement that vitamin. The experts I reference in this book all recommend with good science that an optimal diet usually requires some animal-based foods. Vegetarians must work hard to get adequate protein, healthy fats and all the micronutrients only from plants, but it is doable. Also, vegetarians have the lowest rate of cancer and are generally healthier if they focus on nutrition and avoid refined carbohydrates. In my Blogs on www.leanandfitlife.com, I discuss why I do not agree with many of the leading nutrition experts who promote only a whole-food, plant-based diet.

When eating animal products, you have to be very careful to eat only high quality. As Michael Pollan states, with animal foods “you are what you eat.” Too much animal feed from farming is based on grains, hormones, and other artificial chemicals, making the product less healthy; they are not superfoods. The foods list below all assume you are buying organically raised foods. Beef should only be grass fed and fish wild caught and low on pollutants.

Dairy

The healthiest part of dairy is the fat. Yes, you read that right. The sugar in dairy, lactose, causes GI upset in

most of the world's population. The protein in cow's milk, Casein A, is inflammatory to many people, including infants and children. The saturated fat in dairy has many health benefits, contrary to previous beliefs. Of course, human breast milk is the healthiest form of dairy. Sheep and Goat milk have lactose, but the protein is less inflammatory to humans.

All of this makes **cheese** a superfood! Healthy cheese is not processed, and sheep and goat cheese are the best choices by being the most anti-inflammatory. Cheese has Vitamin K2, which helps direct the calcium in cheese to the bones and not the blood vessels and heart.

European cheeses such as mozzarella, feta, and ricotta are very healthy. The internet has numerous lists of healthy cheeses from credible sources.

I use Half-and-Half in my coffee to limit the plain milk portion. Low fat and nonfat dairy products were a big mistake, resulting from four decades of blaming fat and not sugar for our health problems. Avoid them!

Eggs

Eggs may be eaten every day! David Perlmutter, author of *Grain Brain* and *Brain Maker*, considers eggs as possibly the best food for the brain, which is mostly made of cholesterol. Eggs do not cause heart disease as previously thought. Eggs are not expensive but spend extra to get healthy eggs from an organic supplier with true free-range chickens eating their natural foods.

Fish

Healthy seafood has an advantage over meat since they are not associated with increased cancer rates. Fish from the ocean are healthier than most fresh-water fish except for fresh trout or bass from high altitude. Because our oceans are contaminated with mercury, large fish that eat smaller fish are no longer considered healthy, such as tuna, sea bass, halibut, and swordfish. Dale Bredesen in *The End of Alzheimer's* recommends the SMASH fish. These are:

Salmon

Mackerel (not king mackerel)

Anchovies

Sardines

Herring

Other fish may be healthy depending on location. I also eat shrimp and scallops often.

Meat

There are lots of debates on which meats are healthiest. Some favor poultry such as turkey and chicken, and Daniel Amen favors lamb for its omega-3 content. Grass-fed organic beef and pork may be eaten

once or twice a week, and the serving size should be small, 4-6 ounces.

The healthiest meats are organ meats assuming the source is organic and not contaminated with pesticides or other chemicals. Our ancestors thrived on organic meat such as **liver** and **bone marrow**. The Inuit in the far North lived on caribou and got their vitamins and micronutrients mostly from the bones and organ meat, and they fed the muscle meat to their dogs. Dr. Terry Wahls (*The Wahls Protocol*) credits organ meat with helping to reverse her multiple sclerosis.

Bone broth contains many micronutrients and makes an ideal snack or food that may be used during a prolonged fast.

Our body, a product of evolution, has thrived by being omnivores, eating both animal and plant foods. Being only plant or animal-based in your nutrition offers challenges for total wellness but can be done.