

Fish Food

As researchers continue to discover more reasons to include omega 3 fats in our diet, nutritionist JESS KEANE tells us how.

Give a man an oily fish and feed him for a week. It seems a month doesn't go by without researchers discovering another benefit of including omega 3 fats in our diet; from brain development, to mental health, cardiovascular health, inflammatory conditions, blood sugar balance, hormone health and skin health, the list goes on. Omega 3 fats are often referred to as 'essentially fatty acids'. This is because our bodies cannot make some of them so we must get them from the foods that we eat.

Green leafy vegetables, seaweeds, nuts and seeds are sources of alpha-linolenic acid. From this we make EPA and DHA but the process requires lots of other nutrients. Oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel, trout, sardines and anchovies are good sources of EPA and DHA. It is recommended that we eat one portion of oily fish per week. Adding 1 tbsp of ground flaxseed to your cereal is also a good way to up your omega 3 intake.

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 Jess Keane gives essential, practical advice on food and nutrition – helping you to take control of what you eat to speed up your recovery helping you to feel as healthy, strong and energised. Visit Jess at jkn.ie

Mini Fish Cakes with Pea and Mint Dip

These are delicious, easy and fun to eat. Not just for kids, use them for canapés or make larger cakes and serve them as a starter or light main with a watercress, spinach and fennel salad. If salmon is too strong, try varieties such as haddock, ling and pollock first. These don't have the same concentration of omega 3 fats in them but they are tasty and a good way to introduce fish to the family.

450g salmon, preferably wild or line-caught, if can't get either tinned salmon will also work; olive oil; juice of ½ lemon; 2 sprigs of thyme (optional), 350g floury potatoes, such as Kerrs Pink or Rooster; 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest; 2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped; 1 egg, beaten; flour, for shaping; 3 tbsp olive oil, for shallow frying and lemon wedges, to serve.

Heat oven to 180°C. On a roasting tray, drizzle the fish with a little olive oil, the juice of half a lemon and fresh thyme. Bake for 15-20 minutes, depending on the size of your fish. Meanwhile, peel, cut and cook potatoes in boiling water until tender.

Set the fish aside to cool. When ready, drain the potatoes and tip them back into the pan on a low heat. Mash them with a fork and stir so that they dry out, but don't stick to the bottom. Take off the heat, add lemon zest, parsley, fish and mix. Add just enough egg to bind the mixture.

With floured hands, shape the mixture into bite-size balls, dust lightly with flour and flatten into patties. Fry gently over a medium heat for about 5 mins on each side, until crisp and golden.

To make the dip, you will need 300g fresh or frozen peas, 2 tbsp of crème fraîche, 1 tbsp mint, chopped.

In a pan of boiling water, cover the peas for 4 minutes, until they are tender and still a fresh, vibrant green. Drain, reserving the liquid and tip the peas into a blender. Add enough of the reserved liquid; to cover the peas. Blend into a smooth purée. Add the crème fraîche and mint and blend for a few seconds.



Smoked Mackerel Pâté

GLUTEN-FREE (GREAT ON RICE-CAKES) WHEAT-FREE

Alongside a salad or soup, this pâté makes a great lunch. It also works as a quick starter or snack. Serves six as a starter.

Easy, brain-power food! Mackerel is a rich source of omega 3 fatty acids. We can't make these fats so it's important to get them from our diet. Omega 3 fatty acids have been associated with lower LDL ('bad') cholesterol, improved brain health and weight loss (they improve how we process sugar and store fat).

2 fillets of smoked mackerel, skin removed, flaked; 125g cream cheese; 125g of natural yoghurt; 1 lemon, juiced and 2 tbsp of dill, parsley or chives

Put the smoked mackerel, cheese, lemon juice in a food processor and whizz until blended. Serve on rye crackers, such as Ryvita.



Mediterranean Fish Stew

This is a zingy, fresh stew that will put the spring back in your step. It's packed with flavour, full of goodness and contains ingredients that support the immune system, heart and skin health – need I say more?

Pisto: 2 garlic cloves; 60mg of parsley, chopped; 3 tbsp of olive oil

In a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan gently heat the olive oil and saffron (if using). Add in the onions and fennel. Cover and gently cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the leek and garlic and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, passata, thyme, rosemary, orange juice, orange zest, chicken stock. Bring to the boil, simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Meanwhile make the pistou; blend the garlic, parsley and olive oil into a paste.

Add the fish, the spinach and the olives to the stew. Stir to ensure the fish is covered by liquid. Bring to the boil and very gently simmer for 5 minutes. Check if the fish is cooked; the centre will have turned from translucent to opaque.

Serve with a blob of pistou or some chopped parsley, some new potatoes and a green salad.



GLUTEN-FREE
 WHEAT-FREE
 DAIRY-FREE

4 x 200g of white fish (cod, haddock, pollock, ling or monkfish); 2 tbsp of olive oil; 1 onion, peeled and diced; 3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed; a few strands of saffron (optional); 1 large fennel bulb, trimmed and cut in 8; 1 leek, trimmed and slice; 3 handfuls of washed spinach; 250mg cherry tomatoes; 500ml of passata (or 2 tins of plums tomatoes); 2 bay leaves; 2 tbsp of thyme; 1 tbsp of rosemary, chopped; juice of 1 orange, zest of 1/2 orange; 200ml of chicken stock and 2 tbsp of black olives

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