

# • FOOD AND • MOOD

## PITTSBURGH PIRATES SPORTS NUTRITION & FUELING

Mood can be influenced by a multitude of factors, like stress, environment, sleep, genetics and nutritional deficiencies. Well, the good news is that since the nutrients in our food affect our brain's chemistry, we have the potential to influence our moods. **Take a look below to see what you could be adding to your diet to help boost your mood!**

### FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Fruits and veggies contain essential vitamins and minerals along with antioxidants to reduce inflammation. For example, dark leafy greens are high in magnesium, which can support sleep and reduce anxiety while berries contain phytonutrients, which help protect the brain from the impact of stress.

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### HEALTHY FATS

Fats are essential to the nervous system. Our brains are made up of about 60% fat, specifically omega-3 fatty acids. Studies have shown that individuals with high omega-3 intake are less likely to experience anxiety and depression. To eat more healthy omega-3s, include foods such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, other oily fish, chia seeds & flax seeds.

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### FERMENTED FOODS

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that sends signals between nerve cells and helps regulate sleep, appetite and mood. Since nearly 95% of serotonin is produced in your gastrointestinal tract it makes sense that the digestive system does more than just help you digest food — it also helps guide your emotions. So what are the best foods for a happy gut? Prebiotics, from fiber found in whole grains, fruits and vegetables & probiotics found in fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, kimichi, sauerkraut and miso.

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### DARK CHOCOLATE

All chocolate lovers will agree — chocolate makes you happy! Dark chocolate contains a number of potent compounds like phenylethylamine, which boosts endorphins and improves mood and cognition. It's also a source of antioxidant flavonoids, iron and magnesium, which may help us relax. But remember, even dark chocolate still needs to be eaten mindfully and in moderation!

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### OTHER TIPS

- Don't skip meals! Skipping meals may contribute to mood swings by causing fluctuations in blood sugar levels. Aim to eat every 3-4 hours.
- Eat a variety of foods. Different nutrients = different effects on our brains.
- Don't skip out on your protein! Certain amino acids found in protein are the precursors to brain neurotransmitters that are important to help balance our mood.

#### KEY

 inflammation	 appetite
 sleep	 mood
 anxiety	 cognition
 depression	 relaxation

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# CAJUN SALMON SHEET PAN MEAL

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**Servings: 2**

**Prep Time: 10 min**

**Cook Time: 30 min**

## INGREDIENTS

2 6oz. salmon fillets  
1.5 cups mixed baby potatoes  
1 green bell pepper  
1/2 red onion  
1/2 cup sliced portabella mushroom  
1 Tbsp. olive oil, divided  
1 tsp. Kosher salt  
1 tsp. ground black pepper  
1 tsp. Cajun Seasoning, divided

## DIRECTIONS

### TO PREP

Preheat oven to 400°F  
Rinse potatoes and cut in half  
Remove core from bell pepper and cut into 3/4-inch strips  
Remove skins from onion; cut into 3/4-inch strips  
Rinse and slice mushrooms, or use pre-sliced

### TO COOK

On a sheet pan, toss potatoes in 1 teaspoon of olive oil. Season with salt, pepper, and some Cajun seasoning  
Lay potatoes cut side down (this ensures crispy texture on this side)  
Bake for 15 minutes, remove from oven  
Add remaining vegetables to sheet pan; toss in 1 teaspoon of olive oil and another sprinkle of Cajun seasoning  
Add salmon to sheet pan, coat with remainder of olive oil and Cajun Seasoning  
Bake for another 15 minutes, or until salmon reaches a minimum internal temperature of 145°F  
Remove from oven & Enjoy!

