

Prevention®

Foods That Alter Your Mood

Eat This, Feel That

The mind-altering effects of everyday foods

By Markham Heid

While kicking back with your good friends Häagen and Dazs may seem like the best way to perk up a crappy day—and let's face it, sometimes you just *need* ice cream—a new study suggests you may want to be a little more strategic in your noshing. Turns out that the burst of flavor you get when you bite into certain foods may offer your mood the same happy boost as prescription drugs.

Speaking before the American Chemical Society last week, Karina Martinez-Mayorga, PhD, a research chemist at the National Autonomous University in Mexico, reported that because the chemical properties of certain food flavors may mimic the structure of an antidepressant called valproic acid, food could provide similar mood-enhancing benefits.

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Martinez-Mayorga's results are still preliminary—she's keeping mum on the specifics of her findings—but her research adds to a growing body of evidence that some foods may trigger emotional changes in the eater.

Here, expert-backed ways to get mood-altering boosts out of your food:

- **To wake you up...** High-protein meals tend to increase mental alertness and help thwart fatigue, says Susan Bowerman, MS, RD, assistant director of the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition. Greek yogurt and grass-fed beef are good protein sources, she says.
- **To get a buzz...** Spicy or pungent foods like chili, garlic, and ginger excite your senses and offer some of the same natural kick as stimulants like the caffeine, says Bowerman.
- **To get happy...** The anthocyanins in blueberries, which give the fruit its distinctive hue, have been shown to block certain enzymes linked to depression and anxiety, according to a study from Germany's University of Regensburg.
- **To energize...** Spinach, Swiss chard, and halibut are all loaded with magnesium, which studies have tied to increased energy levels. Bonus: Magnesium has also been linked to lower depression scores, finds a study in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.
- **To prevent the blues...** Romaine lettuce, asparagus, beets, and beans are all great sources of folate, which is essential to warding off depression. A study in the *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience* found that 50% of depression sufferers were also folate deficient.

More from Prevention.com: [The Snuggly Way To Beat Depression](#)

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