

FOODS THAT'LL

Want to feel 10 years younger, in both body and mind? We've got a grocery cart's worth of delicious picks—all backed by science to keep you sharp, fit, and having fun.

BY ALYSSA JUNG PHOTOGRAPHS BY JEFFREY WESTBROOK

KEEP YOU YOUNG



PRO-STYLE: WENDY SCHILLAH



The things many of us take for granted when we're young—having sharp vision, bouncing back from illness, being able to skip down the block—don't have to fade away entirely (even if you'd rather walk than skip!). The foods we eat can have profound effects on how we move through the world, and can contribute to both longevity and quality of life along the way.

The key is anti-inflammatory foods. "Chronic inflammation pushes your body's organ systems to work extra hard to achieve normal functionality," explains Jaclyn London, M.S., R.D., author of *Dressing on the Side (and Other Diet Myths Debunked)* and host of the podcast *On the Side With Jackie London, R.D.* "All that extra work is what ultimately damages your cells over time and can increase risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer," she adds.

So that's the big picture, but what's extra amazing about these types of food is that most of them have bonus benefits that improve specific functions of your body, like vision, heart health, and joint movement. Oh, and they're really delicious, because what's the point of feeling young if you can't enjoy what gets you there?



FOR A SHARP BRAIN

■ **BLUEBERRIES** These tiny fruits are so packed with anthocyanins (antioxidants known for giving blue-, red-, and purple-pigmented foods their color) that they've become the berry of choice in brain research. "A growing body of scientific evidence is examining how blueberries can support brain health as part of a healthy eating pattern, and recent studies suggest that they may help ward off cognitive decline and improve cognition in older adults," says Frances Largeman-Roth, R.D.N., a nutrition expert and creator of *The Smoothie Plan*, a new *Prevention* book.

■ **WALNUTS** It's funny that this wrinkly nut resembles a brain, because it harbors a slew of nutrients for your noggin. In one study, consuming walnuts helped adults perform better on cognitive tests of memory and concentration, likely due to their polyphenols and polyunsaturated fat. Another

study found that women were less likely to have memory issues after age 65 when they ate at least two servings of walnuts per week during the prior decade or so.

■ **FARRO** Whole grains like farro, quinoa, and barley are rich in B vitamins, which research suggests can help protect memory and may slow the rate of cognitive decline. Bonus: B vitamins also help your body more efficiently use all the other nutrients you consume, London adds.

FOR GOOD VISION

■ **EGGS** Their yolks are filled with vitamin A, lutein, and zeaxanthin, which function as antioxidants to protect vision and prevent age-related eye diseases. Choline supports good eyesight and may protect against glaucoma, while "vitamin D can improve and prevent age-related macular degeneration," says Largeman-Roth.



■ **BELL PEPPERS** All colors contain several eye-centric nutrients: vitamins A and C as well as other antioxidants like quercetin, lutein, and zeaxanthin. Vitamin C may help lower the risk of cataracts and other vision problems by preventing the oxidation that can cloud eyes' lenses.

■ **PEANUTS** These crunchy guys are packed with vitamin E, which helps prevent the breakdown of eye tissue; this may reduce the risk of vision problems. They're also filled with healthy fats that help you absorb lutein and zeaxanthin.

FOR A STRONG HEART

■ **LEGUMES** Whether you are a garbanzo bean loyalist or you prefer a bowl of lentils, eating pulses helps keep your heart healthy. "Legumes like beans are naturally high in fiber, which binds to cholesterol particles in the intestines. So instead of entering the bloodstream, where it can harm your heart, it's excreted," explains Laura Iu, R.D., owner of Laura Iu Nutrition. Many beans also contain folic acid, a B vitamin that helps regulate blood levels of homocysteine, an amino acid; too much homocysteine can damage blood vessel walls or lead to blood clots over time.

■ **PLANT-BASED OILS** These types of oil (corn oil, canola oil, olive oil) contain polyunsaturated fats, which are important for heart health. "The combo of unsaturated fats and antioxidants helps improve total cholesterol and

protect blood vessels from inflammatory damage," London says.

■ **SPINACH** "Magnesium is a mineral strongly linked to cardiovascular disease prevention," says Largeman-Roth. Abundant in spinach, it plays a role in regulating blood pressure, blood glucose levels, and more. Spinach is also a source of calcium, which aids the heart by helping regulate blood pressure and supporting maintenance of a healthful weight.

TO PREVENT ILLNESS

■ **GARLIC** Part of the allium family (onions, scallions, and chives are also in this club), garlic contains a compound called allicin that fights inflammation and boosts white blood cells' infection-fighting response, says Iu. "To really reap the benefits, don't be shy—use more than one clove per meal," she advises.

■ **TEA** The antioxidants in the leaves of black, green, oolong, and other non-herbal teas offer powerful immune support. "But what many people might not know is that they also turn on certain genes that may help us combat diseases like cancer and heart disease, and they help reduce inflammation, another contributor to chronic disease," Iu says.

■ **CAULIFLOWER** Cruciferous veggies like cauliflower, broccoli, bok choy, and cabbage contain glucosinolates, compounds that may help protect against certain cancers, says London.

LONGEVITY HACKS

“

Simply put, there's no substitute for or magic pill to replace a balanced diet. We need a combination of all three macronutrients (protein, carbohydrate, and fat), as well as an array of micronutrients and phytonutrients, to thrive," says Jennifer Agha-Khan, M.S., R.D., a registered dietitian at Culina Health.

“

Physical activity, stress management, sleep, spending time outdoors, and mindfulness/meditation are important parts of the overall wellness spectrum that play a huge role in conjunction with diet," says Vanessa Risetto, M.S., R.D., cofounder of Culina Health.

“

The easiest small change with lasting impact for overall health and well-being is to swap out sugar-sweetened beverages for unsweetened ones, including antioxidant-packed coffee

and tea. This can significantly reduce your intake of added sugar (beverages are the number one source in the American diet) while keeping you hydrated and allowing you to prioritize the types of treats you truly enjoy having, like dessert," London says.

“

Rather than striving to eat perfectly every day, consider focusing on adding more of these superfood picks over time, and have fun finding ways to eat them!" says Iu.

“

Enjoy alcohol, added sugars, and processed meats in moderation, as they can increase the risk for chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and even some cancers," says Tamar Samuels, M.S., R.D., cofounder of Culina Health.



TO MOVE WELL

■ **YOGURT** All dairy is a good source of nutritional necessities for strong bones, joints, and muscles. Yogurt is an especially smart choice, letting you spoon up calcium and protein; look for one fortified with vitamin D to help with calcium absorption.

■ **SALMON** Protein supports strong bones and is essential to building and maintaining muscle mass, and this fatty

fish also boasts inflammation-zapping omega-3s, which have been shown to have a positive effect on joints in people with rheumatoid arthritis. And give the canned kind a shot—it often contains tiny edible bones that deliver a bit of calcium.

■ HERBS AND SPICES

These flavor boosters have anti-inflammatory properties and can be especially helpful in easing joint pain and stiffness. They also provide antioxidant compounds for overall health and well-being.

LIVE, LOVE, LAUGH—AND EAT!

Have you heard of Blue Zones? They're regions of the globe where people live longest and are healthiest, and they were popularized by Dan Buettner, a National Geographic fellow and the author of several books, including *The Blue Zones Challenge: A 4-Week Plan for a Longer, Better Life*. Top picks for eating like the world's longest-living people:

SARDINIA, ITALY

The land of olive oil and red wine also relies on:

■ **FENNEL:** Used as a vegetable (the bulb), an herb (the fronds), and a spice (the seeds), it's rich in fiber and vitamins A and C.

■ SOURDOUGH

BREAD: It's often made from whole-wheat flour in this region, along with live lactobacillus (instead of yeast). Fermentation creates organic acids that delay starch absorption, giving this tangy bread a lower glycemic index.

OKINAWA, JAPAN

Seaweed, tofu, and fermented ingredients

like miso are joined by:

■ **PURPLE SWEET POTATOES:** These don't spike blood sugar as much as white potatoes, and they're packed with anthocyanins.

■ **SESAME OIL:** It contains phytosterols, compounds that contribute to lower blood cholesterol levels, and vitamin E, which has antioxidant properties and supports healthy skin.

NICOYA, COSTA RICA

Black beans are eaten almost daily—also try: ■ **YUCA:** This root veggie is high in vitamin C and other antioxidants.

■ **GROUND CORN:** Used to make tortillas eaten at every meal, it increases the body's absorption of minerals.

IKARIA, GREECE

Potatoes and oregano star in Greek cuisine, but these foods also take center stage:

■ **LEMONS:** They're eaten whole, skin and all—the peel may positively affect blood glucose to help control or prevent diabetes.

■ **SAGE:** This herb may be a reason Ikarians have lower rates of dementia.

LOMA LINDA, CA

Home to Seventh Day Adventists who eat largely vegetarian and embrace foods from other cultures. Go for:

■ **VEGEMITE:** An Australian spread with nutrients to support the brain and immunity.

■ **AVOCADO:** It has heart-healthy fats, and potassium helps balance fluid and sodium levels in the body.