



INCLUDING
FOODS TO
BALANCE YOUR
MICROBIOME

100+ EVERYDAY
ANTI-INFLAMMATORY RECIPES
IN 30 MINUTES OR LESS

meals that heal

GUT HEALTH • BRAIN HEALTH
CANCER PREVENTION • HEART HEALTH

—
CAROLYN WILLIAMS, PhD, RD



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This book is dedicated to my children, Madeline and Griffin, and to my grandmother Norma Sikes, who was the quintessential role model for how to gracefully accomplish anything you set your mind to.



welcome



WHAT IF I TOLD YOU that the root of most ailments, from skin irritations to the onset of autoimmune diseases, was caused by one primary underlying condition called inflammation? A few years ago, I probably would have rolled my eyes and put this cookbook back on the shelf for being too hippie health nut. So how did I become convinced more than ever that an anti-inflammatory lifestyle is almost as important as wearing sunscreen or buckling your seat belt? And then end up actually writing an anti-inflammatory cookbook?

It started when I was asked to collaborate on an article for *Cooking Light* in 2016, reviewing emerging research on the role foods play in preventing dementia and brain diseases like Alzheimer's. Study results were significant, pointing toward the importance of an anti-inflammatory diet that included antioxidants. And while I was intrigued by the results, anti-inflammatory eating wasn't the nutrition direction I wanted to take—or so I thought!

Over the next few months, life dropped numerous writing assignments in my lap, all on food's relationship with various health conditions: multiple sclerosis, gut health, cancer, irritable bowel, diabetes, and obesity. It wasn't until the end of all those assignments, after digging through piles of research, that I noticed something: *every* condition that I'd just reported on was caused by chronic inflammation. The *real key* to eating healthy—for all ages—was reducing inflammatory foods and increasing certain nutrients.

My challenge then became how to make anti-inflammatory foods easy, quick, and most importantly, taste good. Was this even possible? I'm a busy mom, so I needed realistic recipes, not 8-hour bone broth or homemade almond milk! While the concepts may be complicated, I was determined that the solution didn't have to be. And I figured that if I could get my family to adopt a more anti-inflammatory way of eating, then I had something.

Fast-forward 18 months and that "something" is *Meals That Heal*, a family-friendly cookbook with recipes that you can tailor to any health condition. It is my sincere hope that this book becomes a staple in your home.

Here's to health and healing! Let's eat!

Carolyn Williams





HANDS-ON: 10 MIN. // TOTAL: 60 MIN. // MAKES 6 CUPS

easy make-ahead granola

This basic granola recipe uses just a touch of sweetness ($\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of added sugar per serving) and is loaded with the good stuff: nuts, coconut flakes, and dried fruit. Serve with yogurt, sprinkle over a smoothie bowl, or just grab a handful to snack on. Watch the oven time closely—you want the mixture to get toasty and fragrant and the nuts to begin to release their oils. But be careful to not leave it in too long, or the oats and nuts darken and can develop a slightly bitter taste.

1 Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly coat the foil with cooking spray.

2 Combine the oats, nuts, coconut, and pumpkin seed kernels in a large bowl. Place the maple syrup in a small microwavable bowl. Microwave on HIGH until warm, about 15 seconds. Add the oil, salt, and cinnamon to the syrup; whisk to combine. Pour the syrup mixture over the oat mixture, stirring well to coat. Spread the oat mixture in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet. Sprinkle with the flaxseed.

3 Bake until golden, about 18 minutes, stirring after 12 minutes. Let cool completely, about 30 minutes. Add the dried fruit, if desired; toss to combine. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week.

(SERVING SIZE: $\frac{1}{4}$ CUP): CALORIES 134; FAT 8G (SAT 2G, UNSAT 6G); PROTEIN 3G; CARB 13G; FIBER 3G; SUGARS 3G (ADDED SUGARS 2G); SODIUM 62MG; CALC 2% DV; POTASSIUM 2% DV

GRAIN-FREE OPTION: Omit the oats, and increase the nuts to 4 cups, the coconut to $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups, and the pumpkin seed kernels to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup. Proceed with the recipe as directed.

flaxseed

Both flaxseed and flax oil are rich in omega-3 fats. Research tells us that getting an adequate amount of these fats in your diet can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease, decrease the risk of dementia and brain diseases, and ease some autoimmune conditions and arthritis. The actual flaxseed—compared to just flax oil—also contains bioactive compounds known as lignans, which may further reduce the risk of heart disease and bone and joint issues, as well as possibly reduce the risk of hormone-related cancers such as breast and ovarian. Whole seeds can pass through the GI tract not fully digested, so it's thought that choosing ground flaxseed is best to get all the seed's benefits. You can also grind whole seeds yourself. Sprinkle flaxseed in yogurt, trail mixes, hot cereals, and the batter for baked goods.



Cooking spray
3 cups uncooked old-fashioned rolled oats
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped unsalted raw nuts (such as almonds, pecans, walnuts, or a mixture)
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup unsweetened flaked coconut
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raw unsalted pumpkin seed kernels (pepitas)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pure maple syrup
2 tablespoons canola or coconut oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 tablespoons ground flaxseed
1 cup dried fruit (such as raisins, cherries, blueberries, or cranberries; optional)



OPTIONAL



HANDS-ON: 20 MIN. // TOTAL: 20 MIN. // SERVES 4

zucchini taco skillet

How does a one-dish skillet meal in only 20 minutes sound? Pretty good to me—and that’s why this is a frequent weeknight dinner on my table. Sometimes store-bought veggie spirals have excess moisture in the container. If this is the case, drain the spirals and place them on a towel to absorb the excess moisture before using them. Or see page 55 for how to make your own veggie noodles.

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ¾ pound lean ground beef
- 1½ tablespoons All-Purpose Taco Seasoning (page 66) or store-bought organic taco seasoning
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no-salt-added black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels (about 2 ears)
- ½ cup water
- 3 cups zucchini spirals
- 1½ ounces cheddar cheese, shredded (about ⅓ cup)
- ¼ cup chopped scallions

1 Heat a large skillet over medium. Add the oil to the pan; swirl to coat. Add the beef; cook for 4 minutes, stirring to crumble. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the taco seasoning and salt; cook, stirring often, until the meat is browned, about 2 minutes more. Stir in the tomatoes, beans, corn, and water; bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Simmer until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes.

2 Stir in the zucchini spirals. Cover, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until the zucchini is just tender, about 3 minutes. Divide evenly among four pasta bowls. Top with the cheese and the scallions.

(SERVING SIZE: 1½ CUPS): CALORIES 352; FAT 12G (SAT 5G, UNSAT 6G); PROTEIN 29G; CARB 32G; FIBER 8G; SUGARS 9G (ADDED SUGARS 0G); SODIUM 763MG; CALC 19% DV; POTASSIUM 13% DV

DAIRY-FREE OPTION: Omit the cheese, and top with ½ diced ripe avocado.

is grass-fed meat healthier?

Grass-fed meat is viewed by many to be a healthier option, often costing \$1 to \$2 more per pound, so make sure you know what the “grass-fed” labels really mean.

“**100% GRASS-FED**” or “**GRASS-FINISHED**” means the animal ate grass for its entire life, other than its mother’s milk when it was a baby.

“**GRASS-FED**” means the animal ate grass and had access to pasture for a portion of its life; the length of this varies greatly by farm.

- None of the grass-fed labels above mean the animal was raised organically and without antibiotics or added growth hormones.
- Most research comparing grass-fed beef to grain-fed (the alternative if grass-fed is not specified) examines beef from cattle that had access to grass their entire life, not just a portion of it. There are no real differences in protein, zinc, or iron content.
- Grass-finished beef tends to be leaner, which means the total amount of fat is slightly lower. The polyunsaturated omega-3 fats are also slightly higher, but when you look at a 3- to 4-ounce serving, the difference isn’t really significant enough to suggest that grass-fed is a better source of omega-3s.





HANDS-ON: 20 MIN. // TOTAL: 20 MIN., PLUS 1 HR. CHILLING // SERVES 24

peanut butter–chocolate chip “cookie dough” bites

Possibly my favorite recipe in the book, this “cookie dough” is seriously good and a bit addictive. A spoonful gives you a sweet, chocolaty, creamy, slightly salty fix all in one. You’ll never know the base is chickpeas—trust me on this one. I promise they won’t hang around long in your house!

1 Place the chickpeas, peanut butter, brown sugar, almond milk, vanilla, and salt in a food processor; process until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape the sides of the bowl as needed.

2 Add 1 cup of the oats and pulse until the oats are blended into the dough, four or five times. Transfer the dough to a large bowl; stir in the chocolate chips and the remaining ½ cup oats.

3 Cover and chill for at least 1 hour or until ready to serve, and serve by the spoonful. Or roll the dough into 1-tablespoon balls. Place the balls on a parchment paper–lined rimmed baking sheet or in an airtight container. Cover and freeze until ready to serve. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes before serving.

(SERVING SIZE: 1 BALL); CALORIES 124; FAT 6G (SAT 2G, UNSAT 3G); PROTEIN 4G; CARB 16G; FIBER 2G; SUGARS 8G (ADDED SUGARS 6G); SODIUM 120MG; CALC 1% DV; POTASSIUM 1% DV

DAIRY-FREE AND VEGAN OPTION: Substitute 100% cacao or vegan dark chocolate morsels (such as the Enjoy Life brand) for the dark chocolate chips.

canned chickpeas

I’ve found that the quality of canned chickpeas varies greatly among brands. The texture of some lower-quality ones tends to be a little drier and crumbly, neither of which is desirable when pureeing chickpeas for hummus or “dough” or roasting them whole. Two brands that seem to consistently provide good-quality chickpeas are Bush’s Best and Goya, so stock up when you see those on sale.



OPTIONAL



- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed and drained**
- ½ cup natural peanut butter or almond butter**
- 6 tablespoons light brown sugar**
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened almond milk**
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract**
- ¾ teaspoon kosher salt**
- 1½ cups uncooked old-fashioned rolled oats**
- ⅔ cup dark chocolate chips (70% to 85% cacao)**