HEALTH

Meet the foodie double acts that'll make you fitter and healthier at super speed

By Helen Russell

orget Beyoncé and Jay-Z or Michelle and
Barack - the ultimate power couples can
be found on your dinner plate. "Combining
certain food groups can actually increase
their nutritional impact by helping the body
fully absorb the goodness contained in them,
and may even help with weight loss," explains Linda
O'Bryne, chief nutritionist for the New Atkins Nutritional
Approach. For example, having a glass of vitamin-C-rich orange
juice along with an iron-packed meal of red meat or lentils can
help our bodies absorb more of the nutrients from both foods.
Clever. So, check out these health-boosting partners, complete with
yummy recipes that combine the two - because on their own they're
good, but together they're grrrrrreat.

POWER PAIRING EGGS AND CHEESE

SUPERPOWERS "Vitamin D, found in egg yolks, increases absorption of the calcium in the cheese" says Linda. "We need this mineral to improve bone strength, control weight gain and help with muscle, heart and nerve functions." What's more, studies found that increasing your intake of vitamin D and calcium can reduce PMS symptoms by up to 40 per cent*.

POWER RECIPE Champions' Cheddar omelette (serves 1) Beat 2 eggs in a bowl, heat a knob of butter in a frying pan and pour in the eggs. Cook for a few minutes, then sprinkle over 30g grated Cheddar cheese. Flip over and cook on the other side until the omelette is browned. Serve with a large green salad.



SUPERPOWERS Natural yoghurt is rich in probiotics - the "friendly" bacteria that live in our guts to aid digestion - while bananas are a good source of prebiotics - a type of dietary fibre that encourages the growth of these good bacteria. "Together they're perfect partners, as prebiotics give the probiotics something to eat, and so keep the digestive system healthy," says Priya Tew from the British Dietetic Association.

But that's not all. "The protein from the yoghurt combined with the fruit will keep you fuller for longer and prevent any blood-sugar spikes you may get from just eating fruit," Priya adds. This will help to keep your weight in check, as you'll sidestep those mid-morning biscuit cravings.

POWER RECIPE Super-healthy smoothie (serves 1) Mash up a banana, then mix with 4tbsp low-fat natural yoghurt and a dash of milk for a yummy breakfast smoothie to go. For an extra fibre hit, add some wholegrain cereal.





POWER PAIRING GARLIC AND CHICKPEAS

SUPERPOWERS According to a study**, the sulphur compounds found in garlic help us absorb more iron and zinc from grains and legumes, like chickpeas. "We need iron to carry oxygen around the body in our red blood cells, to fight off fatigue, aid muscle recovery and regulate body temperature," explains Linda. "Zinc is crucial for immune function, healing wounds, good skin and even our sense of taste and smell."

The benefits don't end there. "Chickpeas are also high in fibre and protein, and have been shown to have cholesterol-lowering properties," says Linda. "Teaming them with garlic, which contains an anti-inflammatory compound called allicin that also helps lower cholesterol and blood pressure, gives you a double whammy of heart healthiness."

POWER RECIPE Hero houmous (serves 2) Drain and rinse a 200g can of chickpeas and combine with 2tbsp lemon juice, 2 cloves garlic, 1tsp cumin, 100ml tahini paste (crushed sesame seeds) and a pinch of salt in a food processor. Blend until smooth and add more lemon juice, garlic, cumin or salt to taste. Drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil and sprinkle with paprika to serve.

POWER PAIRING TOMATOES AND OLIVE OIL

SUPERPOWERS "Tomatoes contain carotenoids - the chemical that gives them their red colour - which helps to boost the immune system. They also reduce the effects of free radicals in the body (caused by pollution and overexposure to sunlight), which can lead to premature ageing and even cancer," says Linda. "Carotenoids are more easily absorbed by the body when they're eaten with fat, so having your tomato with a dash of olive oil dressing will help you get more of the goodness from it."

POWER RECIPE Magic Mediterranean salad (serves 1) Slice a large tomato, drizzle with 1tbsp of extra-virgin olive oil and season with black pepper. Add fresh basil leaves and 25g of sliced mozzarella for a Mediterranean-style treat.

POWER PAIRING SALMON AND BROCCOLI

SUPERPOWERS "Vitamin A, which is found in broccoli, is a powerful antioxidant that increases immunity and is vital for good eye and vision health," says Linda. But as this vitamin is fat-soluble, you can't

absorb it into your body unless it's consumed with fat, so eating it solo just won't cut it.

"Combining broccoli with the healthy omega-3 fats in salmon enables you to get the most out of the vitamin," says Linda. She adds that the fatty acids in the oily fish also have an anti-inflammatory effect and can boost the metabolism, helping you burn calories. Plus, they can lower blood triglycerides (a type of fat found in your blood), which helps to reduce the risk of heart disease or stroke.

POWER RECIPE Heart-smart salmon bake (serves 4)

Fry an onion, 2 cloves of garlic. a pinch of ground pepper and 200g broccoli in a pan spritzed with low-fat cooking spray, before adding 250g spinach. Cook until the spinach begins to wilt, then grease a baking dish with 1/tsp coconut oil and tip in the stir-fried veg. Place 150g of salmon chunks on top. scatter over the zest of 1 lemon. a handful of parsley and 300ml low-fat crème fraiche. Mash 800g steamed cauliflower in a bowl and spoon over the salmon. Season and bake for 30 minutes. 9

Some superfoods just like going solo. They're show-offs like that... **Blueberries** Not only are they high in immune-boosting antioxidants, they're also an anti-inflammatory. As inflammation is a key driver of diseases such as heart attacks strokes and vascular dementia, we need these blue boys in our lives - and tummies. Green tea Just add hot water and ta-da! You have a comforting cuppa packed with FCGC - a notent antioxidant that can inhibit the growth

Dark chocolate Ditch the milky varieties for choccy that has a cocoa content of 60 per cent or higher. Cocoa contains flavanoids, which have been found to produce nitric oxide in the body***. This chemical can help lower blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels.

of cancer cells.