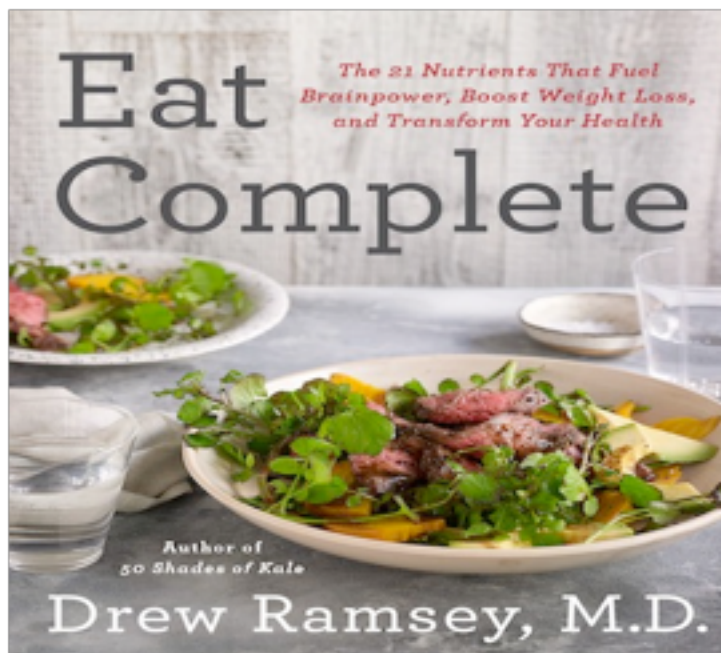


Drew Ramsey, MD, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center and author of *Eat Complete*, has identified 21 nutrients that he divides into three groups: seven that stimulate brain cell growth, seven that keep brain cells alive, and seven that produce energy (um, yes please).

Photo: Eat Complete



Dr. Ramsey is no stranger to the *food-brain game*. He wrote a whole *other* book, *The Happiness Diet*, showing how what you eat affects your mood. Now, he prescribes foods to his patients.

“Really in the span of 10 days to two weeks after people start ‘eating complete,’ they see changes—especially if they were eating a lot of processed foods before,” he says. “People begin to notice they have more energy, *sleep better*, and actually feel lighter.” We got Dr.

Ramsey to tell us the three brain superfoods most people don't eat enough of. Plus, he gives us his favorite ways to cook them up.

## Ready to be a genius? Here are three surprising foods that stimulate brain cell growth.

### 1. Black beans

Dr. Ramsey calls black beans the unsung hero of the superfood world. Not only are they a good source of protein, fiber, and vitamin B, they're a top food source for magnesium, which is a must for your brain cells to be in tip-top condition.

"There's actually a direct mechanism between magnesium and this magic molecule in the brain that repairs brain cells, keeps them alive, and even helps new brain cells to be born," he says. The molecule can actually revive brain cell connections that have been damaged or lost, and has been shown to even help people recover from serious conditions, like a stroke.



## Black Bean Salad with Toasted Cumin Seeds

*Ingredients* 1/3 cup fresh lime juice

2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 tsp mild chili powder

1/4 tsp salt

1/4 tsp ground cayenne pepper

2 tsp cumin seeds

2 15-ounce cans low-sodium black beans, rinsed well  
under cold running water and drained

3 ears fresh corn, kernels cut off the cob

2 red bell peppers, seeded and diced

1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus more for garnish

2 Tbsp minced red onion or shallots

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 avocados

*Directions* 1. Put the lime juice, olive oil, chili powder,

salt, and cayenne or chili powder in a large bowl and whisk to combine. Set the dressing aside.

2. Place a small dry skillet over medium heat. Put the the cumin seeds and toast until fragrant.
3. Transfer to the bowl with the dressing and add the beans, corn, bell peppers, cilantro, red onion, or shallots, and garlic. Toss well to coat. Cover the salad and chill for a few hours or overnight.
4. Just before serving, pit, peel, and chop the avocados and toss gently with the salad. Serve cold or at room temperature.

## 2. Red meat

“I think women have been given a really misleading message about red meat,” Dr. Ramsey says. “Red meat has been wrongly demonized as a root cause of our health epidemic. We are in an era of meat gluttony that obscures its health benefits. There is a reason people crave steak.”

Besides protein, red meat has high levels of iron, which Dr. Ramsey says is arguably the most critical element for brain function because it binds and transports oxygen to the brain. It also has zinc, a power player on his list of brain cell building nutrients.

“The cover image for the book is red meat and rainbow vegetables, and that was really intentional,” he says. “It’s meant to cause people to think about how they consume meat, and the impact it has on their health.”



## Cast-Iron Steak Dinner with Buttery Cauliflower Mash

*Ingredients* 1 head cauliflower, cut into florets  
4 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped  
1/3 cup grass-fed whole milk  
2 Tbsp unsalted grass-fed butter  
1/2 tsp garlic salt  
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 tsp ground turmeric  
4 8-ounce grass-fed steaks, such as shell steak, strip, rib

eye, or flatiron

1/4 tsp [salt](#)

1 Tbsp [olive oil](#)

*Directions*1. Fit a large stockpot with a steamer basket, put in 2 inches of water, and bring a to boil. Add the cauliflower florets, cover, and steam for 6 to 8 minutes until very tender when pierced with a fork. Set aside to cool for 4 to 5 minutes.

2. Put the garlic, milk, butter, garlic salt, pepper, and turmeric in a food processor along with the cooked cauliflower and process until smooth (you may need to do this in batches). Add a few tablespoons of warm water if the mixture doesn't blend smoothly, to adjust the consistency. Transfer the mixture back to the stockpot to keep warm while you prepare the steak.

3. Preheat the skillet over high heat for about 1 minute until very hot. Sprinkle the steak with the salt and black pepper. Put the oil in the skillet, then add the steak and cook for 6 to 8 minutes, turning once or twice, until a sear forms and the meat is medium rare. For a medium steak, cook for 2 to 3 minutes more.

3. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and tent lightly with aluminum foil. Let rest 5 minutes. Serve with the cauliflower mash.

### 3. Trout

"If there's one thing so many people are missing, it's more [omega-3 fats](#)," Dr. Ramsey says, adding that they

are literally the building block for brain cells. “Science is very powerful in how those influence brain development,” he says. The reason why he’s so amped up about trout in particular is because it has a high amount of DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), which is found in brain synapses—the places where brain cells connect to each other. This specific type of omega-3s keeps brain cells alive and also blocks signals that could kill them off.



## Whole Trout en Papillotte with Garlic Broccoli

*Ingredients* 4 whole trout, cleaned  
4 Tbsp olive oil  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/2 tsp paprika



1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

2 lemons, thinly sliced

1 small bunch assorted fresh herbs

3 garlic cloves

2 anchovies

1 head broccoli, cut into florets

*Directions* 1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

2. Rub the trout generously with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil and sprinkle with the salt, paprika, and pepper. Place a quarter of the lemon slices and herbs in the cavity of each trout.

3. Set out four 8 x 8-inch sheets of parchment paper or aluminum foil on the countertop. Fold the edges of the parchment over the fish and secure with toothpicks or pinch the edges of the aluminum foil shut. Place on a baking sheet and transfer to the preheated oven. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the fish flakes when pressed with a fork and is cooked through.

4. Place the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil, the garlic, and anchovies in a mini chopper or food processor and chop. Transfer to a large bowl along with the broccoli florets and toss well. Place the broccoli in another sheet of parchment paper or aluminum foil. Place on a separate baking sheet and transfer to the oven. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes until tender. Serve immediately with the fish.