

## 3 Meal Ideas That Support Healthy Sleep



Sleep is key for our immune system, our mood and mental health, and even our ability to feel energized and creative. Yet many people struggle with getting the recommended 7+ hours of sleep a night. Diet can help! "More and more evidence shows that overall dietary patterns can affect sleep quality and contribute to insomnia," explains [Erica Jansen](#), a nutritional epidemiologist at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health. These three meal ideas incorporate Jansen's dietary recommendations and will help you look and feel your best while also playing a key role that will support healthy sleep.

### What Foods Help Support Healthy Sleep?

"Within overall healthy diet patterns, there are numerous individual foods and nutrients that may be linked to quality of sleep, with varying degrees of evidence," says Jansen. "For example, studies have linked consumption of fatty fish, dairy, kiwi fruit, tart cherries and other berries such as strawberries and blueberries with better sleep. One of the common pathways through which these foods may affect sleep is by providing melatonin, an important modulator of sleep and wake cycles in the brain."

Other foods recommended by Jansen that support healthy sleep include fiber-rich foods like beans, high-protein foods like poultry (she says they're high in tryptophan), and foods high in

magnesium and/or vitamin D. The following three recipes focus on these superstar ingredients so you can eat your way throughout today towards a healthy sleep tonight.

Want more tips on healthy eating? Explore our [self-care guide on healthy diets and overall nutrition best practices!](#)

## **BREAKFAST: Kiwi and Cherry Smoothie**

This breakfast shake has it all: Refreshing flavors using unconventional fruit like kiwi, bursting with sunny, tropical taste. Protein and probiotics from yogurt (probiotics are also key for not just healthy sleep, but a healthy gut and immune system). Lots of immune-supporting antioxidants, such as more than a day's worth of vitamin C. And fresh, fiber-rich greens so you feel energized and full all morning long.

- 1 cup fresh or frozen cherries, pitted
- 2 ripe kiwis, peeled and sliced
- 1 ripe banana, peeled
- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt (or dairy-free yogurt for a vegan option)
- 1/2 cup spinach leaves (optional, for added nutrients)
- 1 tablespoon honey or maple syrup (optional, for added sweetness)
- 1/2 cup unsweetened almond milk or any milk of your choice
- Ice cubes (if using fresh fruit)

Start by preparing your fruits. Wash the cherries and remove the pits if you're using fresh ones. Peel and slice the kiwis, and peel the banana.

In a blender, add the cherries, kiwis, banana, Greek yogurt, spinach leaves (if using), honey or maple syrup (if using), and almond milk. If you're using fresh fruits and prefer a colder smoothie, you can add a handful of ice cubes as well.

Blend all the ingredients until smooth and creamy. If the smoothie is too thick, you can add more almond milk to reach your desired consistency. Garnish with a cherry or kiwi slice on the rim of the glass for an extra touch and enjoy!

## **LUNCH: Refreshing Chicken Bean Salad**

It's the perfect make-ahead meal that you can pack into a Mason jar or similar container and take with you to work, school, or a warm spring afternoon picnic. It's packed with nutrition with a lot of fiber and protein, plus incredibly healthy monounsaturated fats thanks to the creamy richness of avocado. But you'll fall in love most with its tangy homemade dressing that gives this salad a refreshing, vibrant flavor. It's the ideal mid-day lunch as you inch towards the evening and your desire for rejuvenating, healthy sleep.

- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 ounces) kidney beans, drained and rinsed

1 can (15 ounces) chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed  
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved  
1/2 red onion, finely chopped  
1 bell pepper (any color), diced  
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped  
1 avocado, diced (optional, for garnish)  
Salt and pepper to taste

For the dressing:

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard  
1 clove garlic, minced  
Juice of 1 lime  
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat your grill or grill pan over medium-high heat. Season the chicken breasts with salt and pepper. Grill the chicken for about 6-7 minutes per side or until cooked through. Allow the chicken to rest for a few minutes, then slice it into strips or cubes.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the black beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, cherry tomatoes, red onion, bell pepper, and cilantro.

In a small bowl, whisk together the ingredients for the dressing: olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Dijon mustard, minced garlic, lime juice, salt, and pepper.

Pour the dressing over the bean mixture and toss gently to coat all the ingredients.

Add the grilled chicken to the bean salad and gently toss again to combine.

Taste the salad and adjust seasoning if necessary.

If using avocado, gently fold in the diced avocado just before serving to prevent it from browning.

Serve the chicken and bean salad immediately, or refrigerate for a few hours to allow the flavors to meld together before serving.

## **DINNER: Grilled Mackerel with Lemon-Herb Quinoa**

We're now in the homestretch of our meal plan for healthy sleep. This dish stars mackerel. When we think of omega-3 foods, we often gravitate to fish like salmon. However, mackerel is also rich in these good fats and offer a creative take on your standard seafood dinner.

2 mackerel fillets  
1 cup quinoa  
2 cups water or vegetable broth  
1 lemon, zest and juice

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Olive oil for grilling

Preheat your grill to medium-high heat. Make sure the grill grates are clean and lightly oiled to prevent sticking.

Pat the mackerel fillets dry with paper towels and lightly season them with salt and pepper.

Brush both sides of the mackerel fillets with olive oil to prevent them from sticking to the grill.

Place the mackerel fillets on the preheated grill and cook for about 4-5 minutes on each side, or until the fish is cooked through and flakes easily with a fork.

Remove the grilled mackerel from the grill and set aside.

Then, make the lemon-y quinoa! Rinse the quinoa under cold water in a fine-mesh sieve.

In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water or vegetable broth to a boil. Stir in the rinsed quinoa.

Reduce the heat to low, cover the saucepan, and simmer for about 15-20 minutes, or until the quinoa is cooked and the liquid is absorbed. Fluff the cooked quinoa with a fork and transfer it to a mixing bowl.

Add the lemon zest, lemon juice, chopped parsley, chopped dill, and chopped chives to the quinoa. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir until well combined.

To serve, divide the lemon-herb quinoa among serving plates. Place a grilled mackerel fillet on top of each serving of quinoa. Garnish with additional fresh herbs and lemon wedges if desired. Enjoy warm!

## More Ways to Support Your Health

Your diet is just one piece in your immune system's wellness puzzle. [Thymic proteins](#) are another piece. It is the job of these thymic proteins to train the body's immune system to effectively seek and identify diseased cells. Unfortunately, your levels of thymic proteins fall as you get older. [BioPro-Plus 500](#) offers a full dose of thymic proteins to help restore your body's natural levels. Maximize your health by combining the above meals with healthy supplements.



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