

BY DEVIN ALEXANDER

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DON'T SKIP breakfast!

Boost brain power
and metabolism with a
quick and healthy morning meal

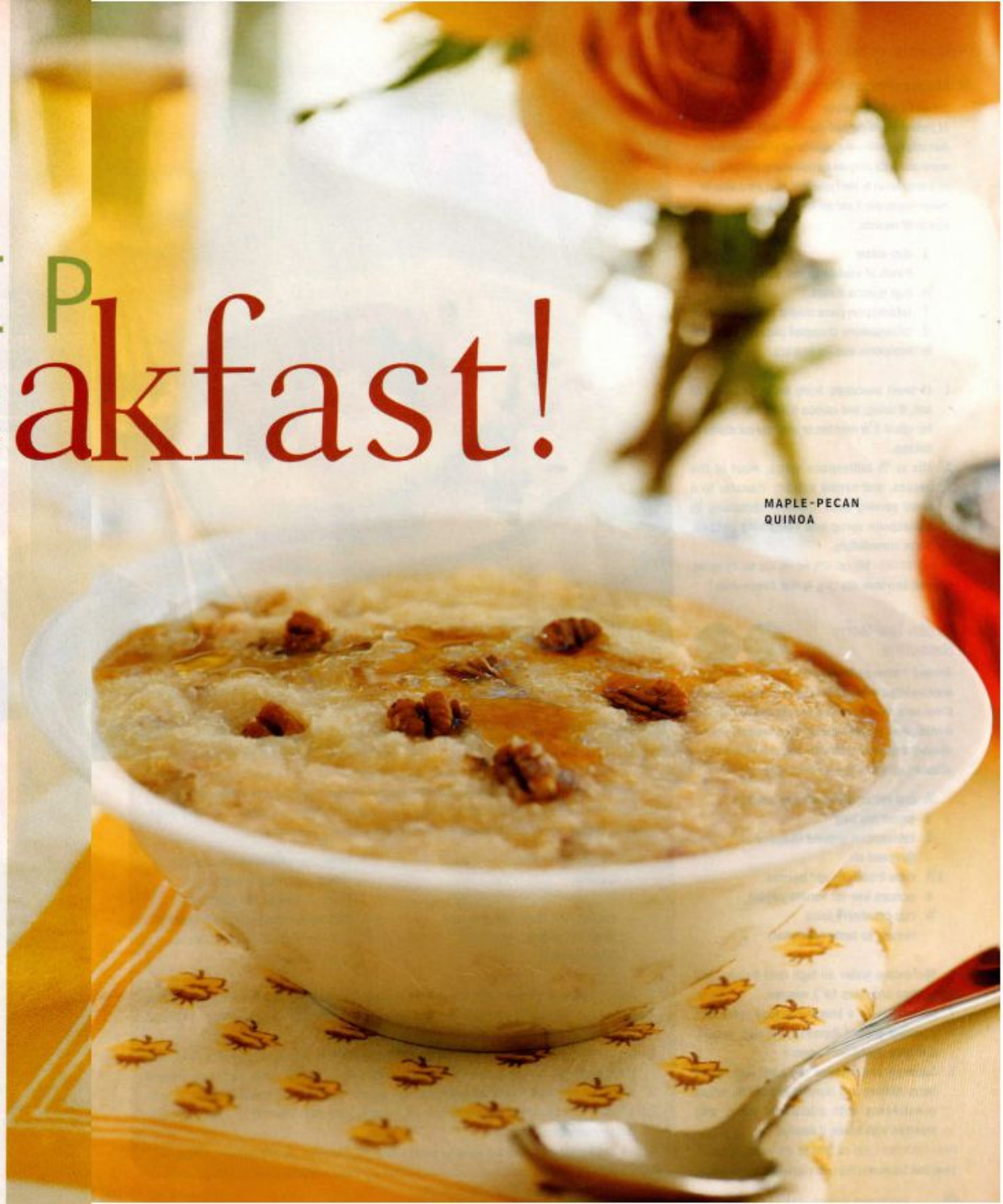
✦ **Few of us would dream** of leaving the house in the morning without brushing our teeth, but many people don't take time to eat before starting their day. This is a mistake. Upon waking, your body has been fasting for 6, 8, or even 10 to 12 hours and needs nourishment.

According to numerous studies, a balanced breakfast helps to maintain health. Nutrients found in a healthy breakfast—including protein, B vitamins, essential fatty acids, and complex carbs—improve concentration, mental performance, mood, and memory. Breakfast is also linked to reduced risk for diabetes or excess weight gain, both by kicking your

metabolism into gear and by decreasing the chance that you'll grab a high-calorie snack. By eating first thing, you give your hungry body the chance to replenish blood sugar levels, burn calories effectively, and maintain more consistent energy all day long.

Some people skip breakfast because they don't have time to prepare a meal. If this applies to you, no worries: Each of these nutritious and tasty recipes can be made in five to ten minutes—that's less time than it takes to stop at a coffee shop for a latte and a pastry. It's a small investment that will make a healthy difference in your day. ▶

MAPLE-PECAN
QUINOA



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*** Maple-Pecan Quinoa** quick **vegan**

Serves 1 / Quinoa contains 11 protein grams per half-cup—up to 50 percent more than other grains—and supplies all of the essential amino acids. Its complex carbohydrates also give you an energy boost to start your day. Plus, it's a snap to make—especially if you opt for quinoa flakes, which cook in 90 seconds.

- 1 cup water
- Pinch of kosher or sea salt (optional)
- ½ cup quinoa flakes
- 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup, divided
- 2 tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

- In small saucepan, bring water to boil. Add salt, if using, and quinoa flakes. Stir and cook for about 1½ minutes or until cereal starts to thicken.
- Mix in ½ tablespoon syrup, most of the pecans, and vanilla extract. Transfer to a small serving bowl. Top with remaining ½ tablespoon syrup and remaining pecans. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING: 288 cal, 37% fat cal, 12g fat, 1g sat fat, 0mg chol, 5g protein, 42g carb, 4g fiber, 13mg sodium

*** Green Tea-Berry Smoothie** quick **vegie**

Serves 1 / When you absolutely need breakfast to go, try this super-powered smoothie. Green tea's antioxidants help prevent cancers, blocked arteries, and even tooth decay; flax provides healthy omega-3 fats; and berries offer fiber and vitamin C—all served up in a tasty, easy-to-carry form.

- ¾ cup water, plus more as needed
- 1 green tea bag
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed or flaxseed oil
- 1½ cups frozen mixed berries
- 6 ounces low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup cranberry juice
- Honey, to taste (optional)

- Microwave water on high until boiling. Add tea bag and steep for 3 minutes.
- Meanwhile, in a blender or food processor, combine ground flaxseed, berries, yogurt, and juice. Blend until smooth.
- Squeeze and remove tea bag. Add tea to berry mixture and blend until smooth. Adjust consistency with additional water and sweeten with honey, if desired.

PER SERVING: 338 cal, 20% fat cal, 8g fat, 2g sat fat, 14mg chol, 11g protein, 59g carb, 13g fiber, 127mg sodium



Fiesta Shrimp Omelet

Serves 1 / When you crave a gourmet breakfast, try this simple dish with fresh herbs and low-fat, quick-cooking shrimp. Shrimp, like other shellfish, contains omega-3 fatty acids, which are good for the heart and help lower blood pressure. Shrimp is also high in vitamin B₁₂, which is needed for a daily brain boost; vitamin B₁₂ deficiency can result in memory loss, confusion, slow reflexes, and fatigue.

- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 large egg whites (or ½ cup egg substitute), lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon minced or crushed garlic
- Pinch of kosher salt (optional)
- 3 ounces raw, large, peeled, and deveined shrimp, chopped
- ½-1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ cup low-sodium pico de gallo or salsa, drained

- Add ½ teaspoon oil to a small nonstick frying pan and place over medium-high heat. When pan is hot, add garlic and shrimp. Turn shrimp frequently until bright pink and cooked through, 2-3 minutes.
- Meanwhile, coat a large, nonstick frying pan lightly with cooking spray and heat remaining ½ teaspoon oil. Add egg whites and season with salt, if desired. When egg is set—there should be no liquid remaining in the center—spoon cooked shrimp evenly over one half. Sprinkle with cilantro. Fold empty half over shrimp. Carefully transfer to a serving plate and drizzle with salsa.

PER SERVING: 213 cal, 27% fat cal, 6g fat, 1g sat fat, 130mg chol, 33g protein, 4g carb, 0g fiber, 613mg sodium

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Sprouted-Wheat Breakfast Sandwich

Serves 1 / Do you think eating a bagel for breakfast means too many carbs and calories? Nutritious sprouted-grain bagels contain complex carbs, essential for brain function. Long-lasting carbs also help prevent dips in blood sugar, averting cravings and hunger pangs. If you can't find prosciutto, substitute shaved Canadian bacon or soy bacon.

- ½ sprouted-wheat bagel
- ¼ ounce (about ¼ cup) shredded low-fat mozzarella or cheddar cheese
- ¼ teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 egg white or 1 whole egg
- ½ ounce prosciutto
- A few fresh arugula leaves

- Toast the bagel half. Meanwhile, place a small nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When hot, add oil, then egg white or egg. Fry until set.
- Immediately top warm bagel with shredded cheese, followed by hot egg. Top with prosciutto and arugula leaves. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING: 238 cal, 23% fat cal, 6g fat, 2g sat fat, 25mg chol, 19g protein, 28g carb, 1g fiber, 728mg sodium

More quick BREAKFAST BOOSTS

* Add fresh winter fruits—pomegranate seeds, bananas, papaya, or blood oranges—to your oatmeal or quinoa for a burst of flavor, plus vitamins and roughage.

* Toss fiber-rich spinach and tomatoes into an omelet or scrambled eggs. Sprinkle with crumbled feta or goat cheese for added calcium and protein.

* Serve poached or fried eggs on sliced, toasted olive or rosemary bread; top with toasted sesame seeds and chopped chives.

* Wrap a tomato- or herb-flavored tortilla around marinated tofu, grated cheese, and chunks of fresh avocado.

* Season and cook ground turkey with cayenne pepper, sage, and other herbs; serve alongside sliced melon.

* Combine peeled grapefruit sections with thinly sliced apple; stir in chopped fresh mint and a bit of freshly grated ginger. Refrigerate overnight, if desired. —D.A.

*** Orange-Buttermilk Pancakes** quick **vegie**

Serves 2 / Substituting rich-tasting, low-fat buttermilk for whole milk and butter is an easy way to reduce cholesterol and fat intake. This recipe also uses whole-grain pastry flour, which adds fiber and protein. Make and refrigerate the batter the night before to save time during the morning rush.

- ½ cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1½ tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- 2 egg whites
- ½ cup low-fat buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon canola spread, melted
- ½ teaspoon orange extract
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated orange peel, or 2 teaspoons dried
- Butter-flavored cooking spray
- Fresh fruit, orange marmalade, or maple syrup (optional)

- Sift together flours, sugar, and baking powder; set aside. In a medium mixing bowl, lightly beat egg whites. Add buttermilk, melted canola spread, extracts, and orange peel. Beat until combined. Add to sifted ingredients and beat.
- Coat a large nonstick frying pan with cooking spray and place over medium heat. Spoon approximately ¼ cup batter into pan for each pancake. Cook until top appears bubbly and

bottom is golden brown. Flip and cook until other side is golden brown.

- Serve topped with fresh fruit, marmalade, or maple syrup, if desired.

PER SERVING: 242 cal, 24% fat cal, 6g fat, 1g sat fat, 5mg chol, 10g protein, 36g carb, 3g fiber, 248mg sodium

*** Breakfast Banana Split** quick **vegie**

Serves 1 / A kid-friendly favorite. Rich in potassium and magnesium, bananas may help prevent heart attacks, high blood pressure, and even ulcers. Yogurt is an excellent source of bone-strengthening calcium and is easier to digest than milk.

- 1 small, ripe banana
- 4 ounces low-fat vanilla, chocolate, or coconut yogurt
- ½ cup low-fat granola or other crunchy cereal
- 2 tablespoons shredded unsweetened coconut, toasted

- Cut banana in half lengthwise and place both halves in a shallow bowl. Spoon yogurt evenly over the middle two-thirds. Top with cereal and toasted coconut. Serve immediately.

PER SERVING: 385 cal, 17% fat cal, 8g fat, 5g sat fat, 9mg chol, 10g protein, 72g carb, 5g fiber, 84mg sodium

When chef Devin Alexander isn't hosting cooking segments on TV, she creates healthy recipes in her Los Angeles kitchen. She also makes time to enjoy the California sunshine while kayaking or playing tennis.