



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION



**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**  
**Nutritious Recipes and Eating Tips**



## Eating the Rainbow: The Power of Phytochemicals

Phytochemicals give plant foods their vibrant colors and may help reduce disease risk, including breast cancer. Each color offers unique benefits, so eating a variety each day supports overall health.



**Red** – Rich in lycopene, an antioxidant that may help protect against cancers and heart and lung disease. Cooked forms, like tomato sauce, are especially beneficial.

**Orange and Yellow** – Carrots, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin are rich in carotenoids that support cell communication and may help prevent heart disease. They are especially tasty roasted with spices and served as a snack or side.

**Green** – Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and cabbage contain compounds that help block carcinogens. Enjoy them in salads, stews, or smoothies.

**Blue and Purple** – Berries like blueberries, blackberries, and raspberries provide anthocyanins—antioxidants that may slow aging and support heart health. They're nutrient-dense and easy to add to any meal or snack.

**White and Brown** – Onions, garlic, cauliflower, leeks, parsnips, daikon radish, and mushrooms provide allicin and flavonoids with anti-tumor and antioxidant benefits. Frozen cauliflower also works well as a smoothie thickener.



## Rainbow Lentil Soup

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: 30 minutes | Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 1 large onion
- 2 large carrots
- 2 large stalks of celery
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoon curry powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup red lentils
- 4-6 cups low-sodium broth
- 1 cup red lentils
- 2 cups kale (optional)

### Instructions

1. Finely chop onion, carrots, and celery; mince garlic.
2. Sauté vegetables in a large pot over medium-high heat for about 4 minutes.
3. Add garlic, curry powder, salt, and pepper; cook 1 minute.
4. Stir in broth and lentils; simmer 25–30 minutes until lentils are soft, adding more broth if needed.
5. Season to taste.
6. Enjoy chunky, or blend until smooth and creamy.
7. Optional: mix in spinach or kale.
8. Serve with fresh herbs, yogurt, or your favorite toppings.



## The Role of Food in Breast Cancer Treatment and Recovery

Good nutrition supports overall health and is vital for breast cancer prevention, treatment, and recovery. Eating enough provides the energy and nutrients needed to:

- **Support cell repair and protection** – helping prevent damaged cells from becoming cancerous.
- **Strengthen the immune system** – reducing vulnerability to illness and supporting resilience during treatment.
- **Maintain hormone balance** – lowering the risk of hormone-related cancers.
- **Promote a healthy weight** – since excess weight is a known risk factor for breast cancer.



### Tips for Eating Well

- Start the day with breakfast.
- Eat small meals every 2–3 hours.
- Choose simple foods like yogurt with fruit, sandwiches, or hard-boiled eggs.
- Limit liquids with meals to avoid filling up too quickly.
- Boost calories with nuts, seeds, avocado, or full-fat dairy.
- Try soups or smoothies if solids are unappealing.

Ask your doctor about seeing a nutrition expert for personalized guidance.



COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION



## Overnight Oats

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cook time: Overnight | Servings: 1

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup milk (any kind)
- 1/4 cup fruit
- 2 tablespoons nuts or nut butters
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon, nutmeg, or your favorite seasoning

### Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients.
2. Refrigerate 2+ hours or overnight, and enjoy cold or at room temperature.

## Overnight Bites

Prep time: 10 minutes | Cook time: None | Servings: 8

### Ingredients

- 1 cup unsweetened quick-cooking oats
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup unsweetened sunflower seed butter
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

### Instructions

1. Mix all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Roll into 1-inch balls (8-10 total).
3. Enjoy immediately or refrigerate.

THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN NUTRITION  
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH  
[IH.N.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU](http://IH.N.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU)





## Making Mealtime Easier

Managing breast cancer can be physically and emotionally demanding, and preparing meals may feel overwhelming. With planning and support, mealtime can become simpler and more manageable.



### Tips for Easier Eating

- **Use prepared produce** – keep frozen, pre-cut, or canned (no-sodium) fruits and vegetables on hand.
- **Cook in batches** – double recipes and save or freeze leftovers.
- **Keep quick protein ready** – stock canned tuna, beans, eggs, or pre-cooked chicken for fast meals.
- **Try build-your-own meals** – tacos, grain bowls, or pizza; let everyone choose their own toppings.
- **Simplify grains** – quinoa, rice, and many other grains can be prepared quickly in a rice cooker.
- **Share the work** – involve friends or family in meal prep.
- **Be flexible** – sometimes takeout is the best option.



COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION



## Shakshuka

Prep time: 5 minutes | Cook time: 20 minutes | Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 bag frozen peppers and onion (or your favorite vegetable)
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin (or your favorite herb or spice)
- 1 teaspoon sweet paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 (28oz can) crushed tomato (no salt added)
- 6 eggs (or 1 can of beans, rinsed)
- 1/2 cup feta cheese (optional)
- 2-4 pieces of pita bread (optional)

### Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan over medium heat; cook vegetables for about 5 minutes, until softened.
2. Stir in seasoning, salt, and tomatoes; simmer 10 minutes until thickened.
3. Crack eggs into the sauce (or add beans).
4. Cover and cook 5-8 minutes, or bake without a cover at 350°F for 7-10 minutes.
5. If immunocompromised, cook eggs until fully set.
6. Serve warm with your favorite toppings or sides.



## Soy - Is It Good or Bad For You?

### The Concerns

Early animal studies suggested that soy compounds (isoflavones), which can act like estrogen, might increase breast cancer risk.

### What Research Shows

Humans process soy differently than rodents, and typical dietary amounts are much lower than those used in animal studies. Population studies indicate that soy is safe and may even reduce breast cancer risk, particularly in cultures where soy is consumed regularly. Soy can also help block stronger natural estrogens in the body.



### Best Sources

Choose whole soy foods like tofu, tempeh, edamame, miso, and soymilk. They're protein-rich, support heart health, and can replace less healthy proteins. Since research on processed soy additives and supplements is limited, focus on whole foods.





## Tofu Bites

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 30 minutes | Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 16oz container firm tofu
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon corn starch

### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F; line a baking sheet with parchment.
2. Drain and press tofu, then cut into even pieces.
3. Toss with olive oil and soy sauce; coat with cornstarch.
4. Spread on baking sheet and bake 25–30 minutes, stirring halfway, until golden.
5. Serve with dipping sauce or add to salads, tacos, or grain bowls.

## Tofu Pudding

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 30 minutes | Servings: 4

### Ingredients

- 1 package silken tofu
- 1/4 cup honey or maple syrup
- 1/2 cup coco powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

### Instructions

1. Blend all ingredients until smooth, scraping sides as needed.
2. For the best consistency, chill in the refrigerator for 1 hour.
3. Divide into 4 containers and add berries, nuts, or other toppings.



COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION

## Content and Feedback



**Recipe Videos**



**Digital Pamphlet**



**Leave Feedback**



THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN NUTRITION  
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH  
IHN.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU



COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION



## Created in association with

Olivia Thomas, MS, RDN, LDN

### References

1. Kumar, A., P, N., Kumar, M., Jose, A., Tomer, V., Oz, E., ... & Oz, F. (2023). Major phytochemicals: Recent advances in health benefits and extraction method. *Molecules*, 28(2), 887.
2. Brown, J., Byers, T., Thompson, K., Eldridge, B., Doyle, C., & Williams, A. M. (2001). Nutrition during and after cancer treatment: A guide\* for informed choices by cancer survivors. *CA: a cancer journal for clinicians*, 51(3), 153-181.
3. Wang, Q., Liu, X., & Ren, S. (2020). Tofu intake is inversely associated with risk of breast cancer: A meta-analysis of observational studies. *PLoS One*, 15(1), e0226745.
4. Boutas, I., Kontogeorgi, A., Dimitrakakis, C., & Kalantaridou, S. N. (2022). Soy isoflavones and breast cancer risk: A meta-analysis. *in vivo*, 36(2), 556-562.

THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN NUTRITION  
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH  
IHN.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU



# COLUMBIA

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF  
HUMAN NUTRITION

THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN NUTRITION  
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

[IHN.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU](http://IHN.CUIMC.COLUMBIA.EDU)

