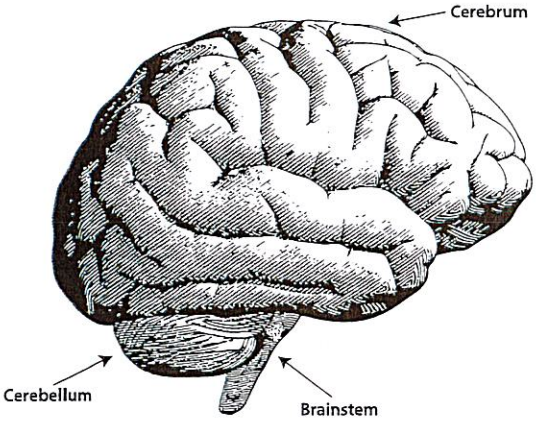
Knowledge @ Noon

Nourishing Your Brain

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
Marais des Cygnes District



What foods aid brains?

Inflammation is a normal process in the body. Too many harmful molecules around the brain and neurons can increase inflammation and, in the long term, might damage neurons and increase the risk of neurodegenerative diseases. The **blood-brain barrier** protects the brain from these harmful molecules that might cause inflammation. Including sources of omega-3 fatty acids can reduce brain inflammation, support new brain cells, and help the neurons communicate better with the rest of the body. Sources of omega-3 fatty acids include fish and seafood, nuts and seeds, plant oils, and **fortified** foods.

B vitamins, especially folate, show evidence of reducing the risk of dementia and slowing cognitive decline. You can find B vitamins in whole grains, legumes, nuts, leafy green vegetables, and eggs.

Vitamin D is an essential vitamin for brain health. A lack of vitamin D (called vitamin D deficiency) can cause issues with memory and thinking and increase the risk of dementia. To ensure you get enough vitamin D, include foods like salmon, tuna, sardines, **fortified** cereals, and **fortified** milk in your eating plan. Vitamin D is also known as the "sunshine vitamin" because you need sunlight to produce vitamin D from the food you eat. Try to get 5 to 30 minutes of sunlight daily on your face and arms, and follow sun protection guidelines. To know how much vitamin D is recommended, based on life stage, visit https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-Consumer/.

Research suggests that some herbs and spices can reduce inflammation in the body and the brain. Turmeric, for example, has curcumin that may protect the brain against inflammation. It may fight against brain diseases by slowing down cognitive decline. Other examples with anti-inflammatory properties include cloves, dried peppermint, rosemary, basil, cumin, and marjoram.

Antioxidants, found in colorful fruits and veggies, tea, spices, and olive oil, keep brains healthy by reducing stress and inflammation.

An eating plan focusing on plenty of fruits and vegetables, moderate amounts of protein, and low amounts of saturated fat and sugar is best for optimizing brain health. The MIND eating plan (ksre-learn.com/mf3602) was designed to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and slow cognitive decline. This eating plan combines the Mediterranean eating plan with the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH). The MIND eating plan focuses on foods that are associated with brain function. These foods are green leafy vegetables, nuts, berries, beans, whole grains, fish, poultry, and olive oil.

Green leafy vegetables like lettuce, spinach, okra, kale, cabbage, and collard greens contain folate, vitamin K, vitamin C, and other **antioxidants** that may aid memory preservation and prevent cognitive decline.

Nuts like walnuts show evidence of brain protection. Other nuts like almonds, cashews, and pistachios are great sources of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin E, magnesium, and zinc. These nutrients support mood, protect brain cells, and regulate blood pressure.

Berries like blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries are rich in antioxidants that support cognitive functions like memory and learning.

Beans and whole grains are great sources of B vitamins that support blood sugar levels and can provide a steady energy supply to the brain.

Fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that help reduce brain inflammation and support brain cell growth.

Poultry like lean chicken and turkey are a great source of iron and zinc, which are used when the brain communicates to the body. Zinc might also reduce depressive symptoms.

Olive oil (especially extra virgin olive oil) is rich in antioxidants and healthy fats that promote overall brain health by fighting oxidative stress and improving the blood flow to the brain.

A balanced eating plan with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, like the MIND eating plan, can also benefit the bacteria in your gut. Why is this important? The brain and the gut message each

Glossary of Terms

Antioxidants: substances that inhibit or neutralize the damaging effects of free radicals, unstable molecules that can cause damage to cells and tissues.

Blood-brain barrier: a highly selective membrane that acts as a protective barrier shielding the brain from harmful substances.

Dehydration: occurs when the body loses more fluid than it takes in, resulting in an imbalance of water and electrolytes in the body.

Fortified: refers to the process of adding essential vitamins, minerals, or other nutrients to a food or beverage that were not initially present or were present in insufficient quantities.

Inflammation: occurs when the body releases chemicals that trigger an immune response to fight off infection or heal damaged tissue. Once the injury or infection is healed, the inflammatory process ends.

Oxidative stress: occurs when there is an imbalance between the production of free radicals and the body's ability to neutralize them with antioxidants. Excessive oxidative stress can damage cells, proteins, lipids, and DNA, contributing to various diseases and conditions, including inflammation, cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative disorders, and aging.

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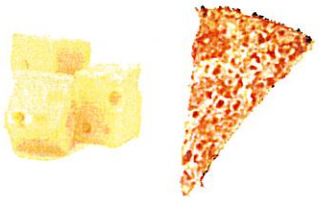
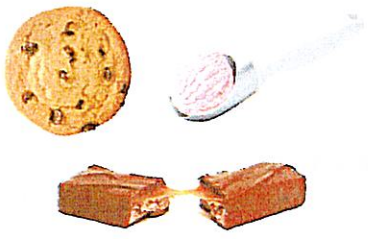
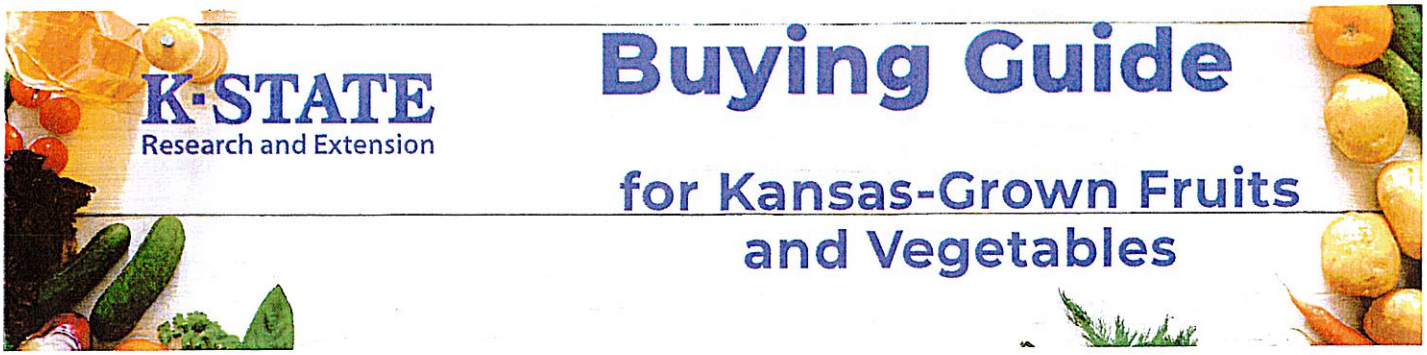
FOODS TO LIMIT LOG

Instructions: Select the days of the week in the boxes at the top of the chart. For each day of the week, type in the **number of servings** that you ate in each MIND diet category. Put a "0" in the box if you did not eat that category of food on a specific day. At the end of the week, add up the total number of servings for each category.

	DAYS OF THE WEEK:	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	TOTA
Red & Processed Meats *No more than 3 servings/week* *Serving: 4 oz*									
Butter & Stick Margarine *No more than 1 serving/day* *Serving: 1 pat or 1 tsp*									
Cheese (whole fat) *No more than 2 servings/ week* *Serving: 1 oz*									
Fried Foods *No more than 1 serving/week* *Serving: 1 meal*									
Pastries, Candy Bars, Sweet Treats *No more than 4 servings/ week* *Serving: 1 treat*									



K-STATE Research and Extension

Buying Guide

for Kansas-Grown Fruits and Vegetables

Choosing fresh, seasonal, Kansas-grown fruits and vegetables offers many benefits. Fresh fruits and vegetables are a healthy way to add more variety to your diet. Shopping for locally grown produce also supports your local farmers and economy.

Seasonal produce can be purchased at farmers markets, roadside or farm stands, you-pick operations, or through community supported agriculture programs. Some local grocery stores also source local produce.

Finding Local Produce

To find a local farmers market, you can visit the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Farmers Market directory: https://www.fromthelandofkansas.com/market/list Your local extension office may also know of local markets, farm stands, or other sources of local produce.

The Kansas Local Foods website lists various directories that can help you find local food sources: https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods/find-local-food/source-local-food/directories.html

What's In Season

As a consumer, it is important to know what is likely to be available locally at a given time of year. This allows you to plan your meals, manage your grocery budget, and find peak quality produce. Although a wide range of fruits and vegetables are available in the grocery store year-round, it's important to know what's actually in season locally, taking into consideration the local climate and conditions. The calendar provided in this guide gives an average range of when to expect different crops to be available in Kansas.

Kansas is a large state, with significant differences in climate from north to south and east to west. The typical timing and availability of each crop may vary by a few weeks in your area and may also vary from year to year. Certain crops may not be well-adapted to your location and are not available at all.

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food

Farmers also use a range of techniques to provide produce at different times of the year than you may be used to expecting from your garden. By using new cultivars, succession planting, row covers, and high tunnels, farmers can produce fruits or vegetables earlier or later in the season than you might expect. Some farmers grow produce in greenhouses using hydroponics or other technologies that make their produce available for much of the year.

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Publications from Kansas State University are available at: bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

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BLACK-EYED PEA SUMMER SALAD

The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME
15 MINUTES
SERVES: 4

MIND POINTS:
1 OV, 1 EVOO, 1 BN, 1 WG

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 cups water
- ½ cup pearl barley, rinsed
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 1 ½ cups cooked black-eyed peas or 1 (15 ounce) can, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup fresh or thawed frozen corn
- 1 cup diced cucumber
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh dill or 2½ Tbsp dried

For the dressing:

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon honey
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper

Optional add-ins:

- ¼ cup light feta cheese
- ¼ cup fresh basil, torn

Suggested pairings:

- Salmon, chicken, leafy green salad

DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring the water to a boil in a medium pot over medium-high heat. Add the barley and a pinch of salt, reduce to a simmer and cook for 20-25 minutes or until tender and chewy. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the black-eyed peas, corn, cucumber, onion and dill. Stir in the cooled barley.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, honey, salt and pepper.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to combine. Top with feta and/or basil if using.

Nutrition Facts

4 servings per container

Serving size	1/4 Recipe
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**290**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 15g	19%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 490mg	21%
Total Carbohydrate 35g	13%
Dietary Fiber 5g	18%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 1g Added Sugars	2%
Protein 8g	16%

Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice

THE OFFICIAL MIND DIET

Balsamic Berries

The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME: 5 minutes
COOK TIME: 30 min to marinate

Serves: 6

MIND Points:
1.5 Ber

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups fresh strawberries
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 cup fresh raspberries
- 1 cup fresh blackberries
- 1 ½ tablespoons good balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1-2 T fresh mint for garnish (optional)

Nutrition Facts: (serving size: ¾ cup): Calories: 60, Total Fat: 0 g, Saturated Fat: 0 g, Trans fat: 0 g, Polyunsaturated Fat: 0 g, Monounsaturated Fat: 0 g, Cholesterol: 0 mg, Sodium: 0 mg, Total Carbohydrates: 15 g, Dietary Fiber: 4 g, Total Sugars: 10 g (including 2 g added sugar), Protein: 1 g

DIRECTIONS:

1. Using a colander, rinse strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries under cold water. Spread out all of the fruit on a towel to dry.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together balsamic vinegar and sugar. Place berries in a serving bowl and drizzle balsamic mixture over berries. Gently toss together.
3. Marinade in the refrigerator or on countertop for at least 30 mins. Garnish with mint leaves. Serve room temperature or cold within 2-3 days.

• THE OFFICIAL •
MIND DIET

WHOLE GRAIN PANCAKES WITH SWEET BLUEBERRY COMPOTE

The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME
10 minutes
COOK TIME
10 minutes
SERVES 6

Ingredients

1 ½ cups spelt flour (or white flour if you can't find spelt)
¾ cup quick oats
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon sea salt
1 apple (unpeeled), cored and grated
1 large egg, beaten
2 cups milk of choice
2 tablespoons EVOO
1 tablespoon honey
3 tablespoons soft plant based butter spread or dairy butter

Compote:

2 cups blueberries
¼ cup pure maple syrup
Juice of ½ a lemon, or 1 ½ tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons water
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Portion Size	1 Serving
359 Calories	
Total Fat	13.6g
Cholesterol	31mg
Sodium	293.1mg
Total Carbs	53.7g
Protein	7.1g

Directions

1. In a large bowl, combine the flour, oats, baking powder, salt, apple, egg, milk, oil, and honey. Stir well to incorporate all the ingredients.
2. Heat a griddle or large skillet over medium high heat. Put a tablespoon or so of butter spread in the pan and let it melt. Using a ¼ cup measure, pour the batter onto the griddle, making sure not to crowd the pan. Let the pancakes cook until the bottoms of lightly browned and little bubbles form around the edges, then flip them. Cook another 60 seconds, or until pancakes are lightly browned.
3. Remove from heat and continue cooking until all batter has been cooked. Add more butter spread as needed.
4. While the pancakes are cooking, in a medium saucepan, combine the blueberries, maple syrup, lemon juice, water, and cornstarch. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook for 3-5 minutes, or until blueberries have burst and sauce has thickened. Pour over the pancakes.

MIND POINTS: 1 WG, 0.5 BER, 0.5 EVOO, 1 SWT

MIND Diet Greens and Berry Smoothie

The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME: 5 minutes

SERVES: 2

MIND POINTS:
1 LG, 1 Ber

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups leafy greens such as spinach or arugula
- ½ cup frozen strawberries
- ½ cup frozen blueberries
- 1 medium banana
- 1 ½ cups unsweetened almond milk or milk of choice
- ½ scoop vanilla protein powder
- 1 tablespoon honey

Optional add-ins:

- ½ cup frozen cauliflower
- ½ an avocado
- 3 tablespoons hemp seeds or 2 tablespoons nut butter
- dash of cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon matcha green tea powder
- 1 teaspoon ground espresso

DIRECTIONS

1. Add all ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth.

Nutrition Facts

2 servings per container

Serving size	1 Smoothie
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**180**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 2.5g	3%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	3%
Sodium 170mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 8g	21%
Total Sugars 21g	
Includes 9g Added Sugars	18%
Protein 8g	16%

Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

THE ULTIMATE SALAD BAR SALAD

The Official MIND Diet

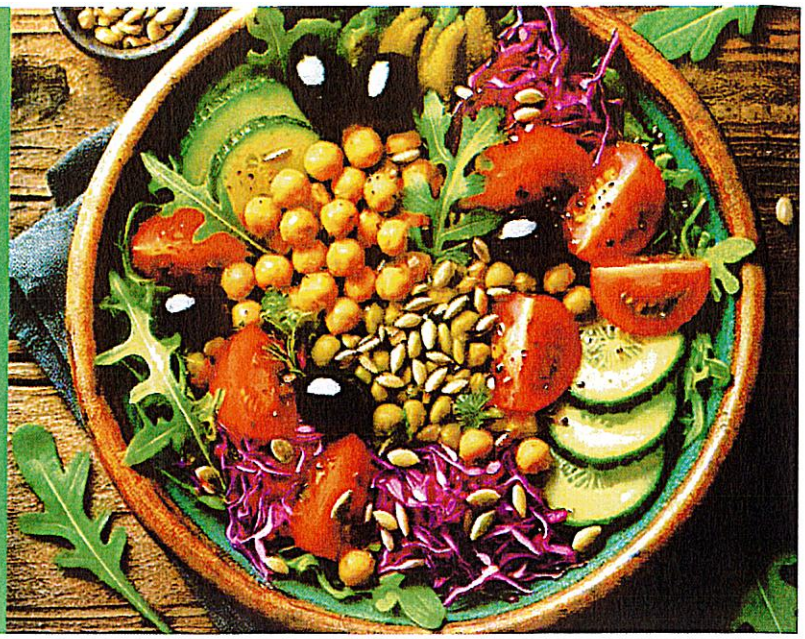
PREP TIME

10 MINUTES

SERVES 3

MIND POINTS:

1 LG, 1.5 OV, 0.5 NUT, 1 EVOO, 1 BN



INGREDIENTS:

Salad:

- 3 cups chopped leafy greens, such as spinach or arugula
- 1 cup chopped tomatoes
- 1 cup shredded purple cabbage
- ½ cup sliced cucumber
- 1 can chickpeas, rinsed and drained and lightly smashed
- ¼ cup raw red onion, thinnly sliced
- 1/3 cup chopped bread and butter pickles
- 3 tablespoons sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds

Dressing:

- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil (EVOO)
- Squeeze of lemon
- Optional garnish: fresh dill or parsley, black or kalamata olives

Suggested protein add-ins: 2 oz yellowfin tuna, 3 oz grilled chicken or salmon, 3 oz tempeh

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a medium salad bowl, combine greens, tomatoes, cabbage, cucumber, chickpeas, red onion, pickles, and seeds.
2. Drizzle with EVOO and a squeeze of lemon. Toss everything together to coat veggies in dressing.
3. Garnish with fresh herbs such as dill or parsley as desired

Customize this salad with suggested protein add-ins or any of your favorite pantry or fridge ingredients. Get creative and make something you look forward to!

Nutrition Facts

3 servings per container

Serving size	1/3 Recipe
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**400**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 24g	31%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 500mg	22%
Total Carbohydrate 41g	15%
Dietary Fiber 8g	29%
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 9g	18%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

THE OFFICIAL MIND DIET

High Protein Bean and Egg Wraps

The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME: 10 minutes
COOK TIME: 5 minutes
SERVES: 2

MIND POINTS:
0.5 LG, 0.5 OV, 0.5 EVOO,
1 WG, 0.5 BN

INGREDIENTS:

- ¼ cup 2% plain Greek yogurt
- ½ avocado, smashed
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 10-inch whole wheat tortilla wraps
- ½ cup pinto or black beans, rinsed
- 3 eggs, lightly scrambled
- 1 tablespoon Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO)
- 1 cup finely chopped romaine lettuce leaves
- ½ cup small dice tomatoes

Optional Garnish:

- Hot sauce
- Salsa
- Pickled jalapenos or pickled red onion

Nutrition Facts

2 servings per container

Serving size	1 Wrap
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	440
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 24g	31%
Saturated Fat 6g	30%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 258mg	86%
Sodium 420mg	18%
Total Carbohydrate 30g	12%
Dietary Fiber 9g	29%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 18g	36%

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a small bowl, mix together the Greek yogurt, mashed avocado, garlic powder, onion powder, and cumin until smooth.
2. Lay the tortillas flat. Spread the yogurt–avocado mixture evenly over each tortilla, leaving a ½-inch border around the edges.
3. Down the center of each tortilla, layer the beans, scrambled eggs, lettuce, and tomatoes.
4. Fold in the sides, then roll up tightly away from you, tucking in the ends as you go.
5. Preheat a pan with EVOO over medium heat. Place the wraps seam side down. If they start to open, gently press with a plate or pan. Cook for 2–3 minutes per side, until golden and crisp.
6. Serve topped with any extra yogurt–avocado mixture, plus lettuce and tomatoes.

THE OFFICIAL MIND DIET

SUMMER TACO BOWLS

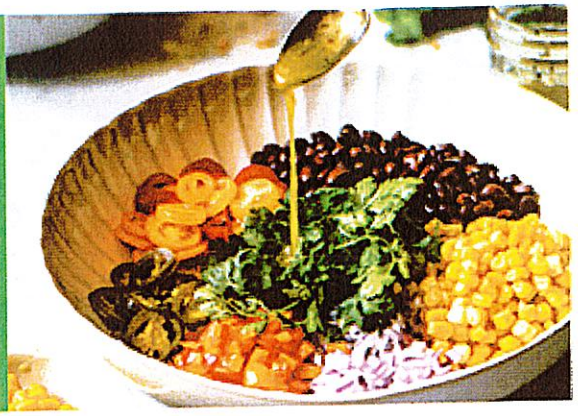
The Official MIND Diet

PREP TIME

15 min

COOK TIME

20 min



INGREDIENTS

Spices:

2 teaspoons garlic powder
1 tablespoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon smoked paprika
½ teaspoon chilli powder
½ teaspoon salt

Veggies:

1 15-oz can black beans, rinse/drain
2 cups fresh corn (or thawed, frozen)
2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
1 large red bell pepper, chopped
6 cups chopped romaine lettuce
1 cup red or white quinoa
2 ¼ cup water
1 lb lean ground turkey

Toppings:

½ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
1 large avocado, cut into cubes
1 cup baked tortilla chips, broken

Dressing:

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1-2 limes (3 TB lime juice)
1 tablespoon honey

PROCEDURE

1. Measure spices into a small bowl and set aside. Next, chop corn (if using from a cobb), tomatoes, bell pepper, and romaine lettuce. Set aside.
2. Combine the quinoa and 2 cups water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and cook for 15-20 minutes, or until light and fluffy.
3. While the quinoa is cooking, heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add the ground turkey and brown for 5 minutes, lightly mixing. Mix in the spices- garlic powder, ground cumin, smoked paprika, chilli powder and salt. Add the remaining ¼ cup of water and cook for another 5-7 minutes, or until the turkey is fully cooked through. Remove from heat.
4. In a small bowl whisk together the oil, lime juice and honey. Set aside.
5. In a large serving bowl, add the quinoa, ground turkey, black beans, corn, tomatoes and bell peppers. Top with dressing and toss together.
6. Top with cilantro, avocado and tortilla chips.