



National Mediterranean Diet Month

Since 1990 the popularity of the Mediterranean Diet has exploded worldwide. This modern nutritional healthy diet is inspired by the traditional dietary patterns of Spain, southern Italy, Greece, specifically the Greek island of Crete, and parts of the Middle East. It has received acknowledge and praised from renowned chefs to researchers to become one of the most important diets for good health. But what are the foods that are in this diet? The food from the diet consists primarily of fresh local seasonal fruits and vegetables with an emphasis on poultry and seafood, rice, grains, beans and pastas. Eggplant, artichokes, squash, tomatoes, legumes, onions, mushrooms, okra, cucumbers, and a variety of greens are served fresh, baked, roasted, sautéed, grilled and puréed. The style of cooking for the Mediterranean Diet which is grilling or broiling is prevalent method of cooking particularly with the use of Olive Oil that is used in the preparation of salads, marinades, vegetables, poultry and seafood. Yogurt and cheese are also a major component of Mediterranean cooking and so is fresh seafood which provides is close proximity access to the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean Diet uses an abundance of fresh herbs which gives the food that very special favor. Some of the Classic Mediterranean dishes that use fresh herbs are the Spanish paella and Italian risotto with seafood. The important qualities of this diet are the high olive oil consumption, high consumption of legumes, high consumption of unrefined cereals, consumption of fruits, high consumption of vegetables, moderate consumption of dairy products (mostly as cheese and yogurt), moderate to high consumption of fish, low consumption of meat and meat products, and moderate wine consumption. The Mediterranean diet is not only focus on food but it is also focus on an active lifestyle. A more relaxed attitude to eating, plenty of sunshine and more physical activity are likely to be contributing to the overall healthy lifestyle in this regional part of the world.

What are the secret ingredients to the Mediterranean diet for longer healthier lives? As it was previously noted of the types of foods that are part of the diet, there are some health benefits to each type of foods.

Olive oil is very much used a lot in the Mediterranean diet because it contains a very high level of monounsaturated fats, most notably oleic acid, which epidemiological studies suggest may be

linked to a reduction in coronary heart disease risk. Also there is evidence that the antioxidants in olive oil improve cholesterol regulation and LDL cholesterol reduction, and that it has other anti-inflammatory and anti-hypertensive effects.

Fresh fruits and vegetables have been shown to be protective against both heart disease and cancer. This is probably due to the antioxidants that they contain. Tomatoes are indeed a major source of antioxidants and heat processing such as cooking, as in the preparation of tomato sauces is recommended as it increases the availability of lycopene, one of the main antioxidants in tomatoes.

The Mediterranean Diet uses oily fish (such as sardines) for important health benefits and is a great source of omega-3 polyunsaturated fats. Oily Fish are complex long chain derivatives of these fats appear to be particularly beneficial to heart health because of their anti-inflammatory and vasodilator properties, which keeps blood flowing smoothly.

In the Mediterranean region, wine is drunk in moderation and is usually taken with meals. Moderation means for men - two glasses per day and for women – one glass per day. Wine, especially red wine, contains a vast array of plant compounds with health-promoting qualities called phytonutrients. Among them, polyphenols, which are powerful antioxidants, protect against LDL oxidation and other phytonutrients play a role in the inhibition of platelet aggregation and vasodilation etc.

Oldways have a wonderful Mediterranean Diet Pyramid that shows the importance of having a healthy lifestyle plan. Below are the Common Foods and Flavors of The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid list. It shows the type of foods and beverages that are being used for the Mediterranean Diet. For further information on healthy eating click [Living Healthy](#).

Try to prepare a Mediterranean Diet dish such as Bouillabaisse (A traditional fish stew from France's Provence region, including fish, shellfish and vegetables such as leeks, tomatoes, celery and potatoes.) or Moudammas (Cooked fava beans; a popular dish in Middle Eastern cuisine.) this evening for your family. You would be glad that you did! Salute!

Common Foods and Flavors of The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

Vegetables & Tubers	Artichokes, Arugula, Beets, Broccoli, Brussels Spouts, Cabbage, Carrots, Celery, Celeriac, Chicory, Collard Cucumber, Dandelion Greens, Eggplant, Fennel, Kale, Leeks, Lemons, Lettuce, Mache, Mushrooms, Mustard Greens, Nettles, Okra, Onions, (red, sweet, white) Peas, Peppers, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Purslane, Radishes, Rutabega, Scallions, Shallots, Spinach, Sweet Potatoes, Turnips, Zucchini
Fruits	Avocados, Apples, Apricots, Cherries, Clementines, Dates, Figs, Grapefruit, Grapes, Oranges, Melons, Nectarines, Olives, Peaches, Pears, Potatoes, Pomegranates, Strawberries, Tangerines, Tomatoes
Grains	Breads, Barley, Buckwheat, Bulgur, Couscous, Durum, Farro, Millet, Oats, Polenta, Rice, Wheatberries
Fish & Seafood	Abalone, Cockles, Clams, Crab, Eel, Flounder, Lobster, Mackerel, Mussels, Octopus, Oysters, Salmon, Sardines, Sea Bass, Shrimp, Squid, Tilapia, Tuna, Whelk, Yellowtail,
Poultry, Eggs, Cheese, & Yogurt	Chicken, Duck, Guinea Fowl Eggs (Chicken, Quail, and Duck) Cheeses (Examples Include: Brie, Chevre, Corvo, Feta, Haloumi, Manchego, Parmigiano-Reggiano, Pecorino, Ricotta) Yogurt, Greek Yogurt
Nuts, Seeds, & Legumes	Almonds, Beans (Cannellini, Chickpeas, Fava, Kidney, Green), Cashews, Hazelnuts, Lentils, Pine Nuts, Pistachios, Sesame Seeds (Tahini), Split Peas, Walnuts
Herbs & Spices	Anise, Basil, Bay Leaf, Chiles, Clove, Cumin, Fennel, Garlic, Lavender, Marjoram, Mint, Oregano, Parsley, Pepper, Pul Biber, Rosemary, Sage, Savory, Sumac, Tarragon, Thyme, Zatar
Meats & Sweets	Pork, Beef, Lamb, Mutton, Goat Sweets (Examples include: Baklava, Biscotti, Creme Caramel, Chocolate, Gelato, Fruit Tarts, Kunefe, Lokum, Mousse Au Chocolat, Sorbet, Tiramisu)
Water & Wine	Drink Plenty Of Water Wine In Moderation