

# Meet the Mediterranean Diet

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# Agenda

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**The Basics of the Mediterranean Diet**  
**Mediterranean Diet Guidelines**  
**The Mediterranean Diet and Health/Disease**  
**Highlight Food and Ingredients of Interest**  
**Cooking Demo**

# **The Basics of the Mediterranean Diet**

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## The Is No Single Mediterranean Diet

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**How many countries represent the Mediterranean? 21**

The foods and flavors are as diverse as the countries are.

There are common themes about eating habits and the style of eating.



## The Mediterranean Diet: True or False?

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**The Mediterranean Diet is a specific meal plan. False**

- It is not a “fad” diet, but instead is a way of life.
- Diet is a word used to describe all the foods that we eat regularly.
- It is a version of a plant-based diet. Staples include:
  - Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, olive oil, and seafood.
- It emphasizes mostly fresh food that is minimally processed.

## The Best Diet in the World?

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- The Mediterranean Diet ranked number 1 in best diets overall.
- This year marks the 7<sup>th</sup> time it was consecutively voted #1.
- Experts from varying specialties agree that this way of eating is associated with evidence-based health benefits, is sustainable, and nutritionally complete.
- You and I might agree that it ranks highly for taste!

## What about other diets, such as the DASH diet?

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- **DASH** diet: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension developed by experts at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in 1997
- Designed to intentionally incorporate nutrients in amounts that are necessary for regulating blood pressure.
- Low sodium, High potassium, High calcium, High magnesium
- Is a plant-based diet similar to the Mediterranean diet, however more specific with targets for the nutrients.
- Compared to the Mediterranean Diet, more dairy is recommended
- Ranked by experts, for its health benefits to lower blood pressure, manage weight, lower risk for Type 2 diabetes, and support bone health.

**#2 Best Diet  
Overall**

# Mediterranean Diet Guidelines

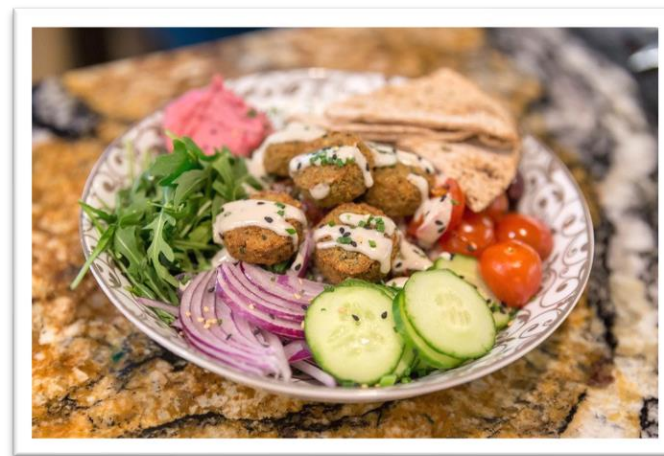
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## What to Eat

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- Fill your plate with a wide variety of food.
- Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, legumes, olive oil, herbs and spices daily.
- Eat seafood and fish twice per week, or more.
- Poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt are consumed in moderation.
- Red meat and sweets are reserved as a treat.



# A Day on the Mediterranean Diet

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## Per meal

- 2 veggies
- 1-2 fruits
- 1-2 grains
- Olive oil at every meal

## Per Day

- 1-2 servings of nuts per day
- 2 servings of dairy per day

## Per Week

- 2-4 eggs
  - 2+ legumes
  - 2+ fish
- < 2 servings of red meat per week
- 2-4 servings of sweets per week

# A Day on the Mediterranean Diet

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- **Breakfast:**  
Savory breakfast toast or  
Shakshuka
- **Lunch:**  
Chickpea and spinach salad with avocado or  
Turkish Pide, “Turkish pizza”
- **Dinner:**  
Briam with baked salmon or  
Baked falafel with tabouli
- **Snacks:**  
Homemade hummus or bean dip with cut up  
veggies  
Almonds or walnuts with figs or dates

## More on the Mediterranean

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- The diet is relatively high in fat, due to the liberal use of olive oil.
- Meats and sweets in very limited amounts, they are considered as a condiment for portion size.
- Wine is consumed in moderation but is not essential.
- Wine is only a minor element of the total Mediterranean benefit.

# **The Mediterranean Diet and Health**

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## Mediterranean Diet and Cancer

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- A growing number of studies link a Mediterranean pattern of eating with lower cancer risk.
- This is in comparison to those eating a “S.A.D.” diet who eat much more meat, refined grains, and sweets.
- There is probable evidence that a Mediterranean-type diet pattern can reduce the risk for weight gain, overweight, and obesity.
- There is strong evidence that excess body fat increases the risk for at least 12 cancers.

## Mediterranean Diet and Cancer

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- A recent systematic review and meta-analysis provided an updated body of evidence on the association of Mediterranean Diet and cancer risk.
- Results suggested that the highest adherence to the Med Diet was inversely associated with the risk of all-cause mortality among cancer survivors.

### Why?

- High in fiber, phytochemicals, antioxidants
- \*Conservative interpretation should be applied

## What doesn't the Mediterranean Diet do?

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- Reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Reduces the risk of cognitive decline and dementia
- Reduces risk for Type 2 diabetes.
- Likely reduces the symptoms and progression of inflammatory and autoimmune conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis.
- May help ease depression.
- May have a positive influence on the reduction of the bone resorption process and muscle wasting (support bone and muscle health).

Primarily through the potential of reducing inflammation in the body.

*Synergistic* effect of all the nutrients and compounds found in all the foods consumed regularly.



# **Foods and Ingredients of Interest**

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## Olive Oil

**Technically, yes. We can eat too much of anything “good” for us**

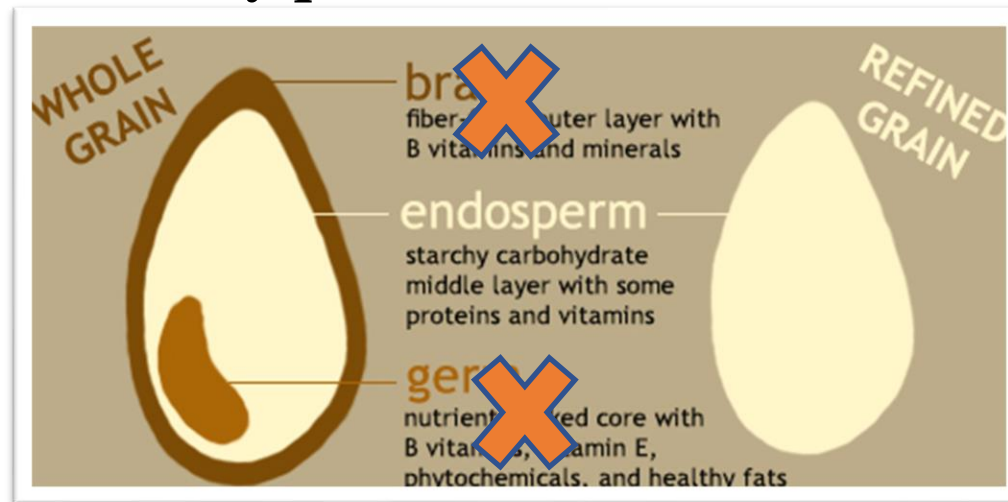
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- Common denominator in the Mediterranean Diet  
Is there such a thing as too much?
- Estimates that 40% of calories come from olive oil  
high in tocopherols, carotenoids, and polyphenols = anti-inflammatory.
- Polyphenol content varies depending on how ripe the oil is, and the extent of processing involved use olive oil in all cooking methods.
- Contrary to popular belief, has a high smoke point
- Polyphenol content protects the oil from breaking down when cooking.
- Seek out extra virgin olive oil with a harvest/best by date on the label.

## Whole Grains

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- Farro, bulgur, barley, oats, buckwheat, millet, freekeh
- All are minimally processed.



- Contribute a source of fiber, resistant starches, plant protein, phenolic acids, phytic acids, lignans.
- Support gut health, optimize blood sugar control, increase the self-destruction of cancer cells.

## Onions and Garlic

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Which of the two is known as the "stinking rose"? **Garlic**

Both are the basic building blocks of flavor.

Locally sourced choices will not only be fresher, but also more robust in flavor.

Allium compounds:

- inhibit enzymes that activate carcinogens
- boost enzymes that deactivate carcinogens
- reduce inflammation
- support DNA repair
- slow the growth and stimulate self-destruction of cancer cells
- limit cancer's ability to spread by decreasing the tumor's ability to grow new blood vessels

## Leafy Greens

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- Spinach, kale, arugula, chard, dandelion, turnip, mustard, and beet greens ...
- 150 varieties of wild greens
- Nutritional powerhouses
  - Vitamins A, C, E, and K
  - Fiber
  - Iron, magnesium, potassium
  - Carotenoids – responsible for their dark green color
  - Glucosinolates:
    - Stimulate the body's on antioxidant defenses
    - Shift the active form of estrogen into the weaker form

## Tomatoes

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- Technically a fruit, in the berry family
- Variety of colors and sizes:  
Purple, yellow, orange, red, striped  
Cherry to beefsteak
- Equally versatile in the kitchen, from sauces and stews to fresh salads to stuffed versions
- Carotenoids:  
Function like antioxidants and stimulate the body's own antioxidant defenses,  
Decreasing free radical damage to DNA that can lead to cancer.

## Herbs and Spices

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- Herbs and spices give regional expression to Mediterranean cooking.
- Can make a dish Greek or Turkish or Italian or any of the Mediterranean countries, depending upon the herbs and spices used.
- Using herbs and spices can also reduce the need for a lot of added salt.
- Basil, bay leaf, black pepper, cloves, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, garlic, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, paprika, rosemary, saffron, sage, savory, sumac, tarragon, thyme, and turmeric.
- Sometimes spices are used alone, though when used in combination spices have the ability to create complex flavor profiles.
- Baharat, Herbes de Provence, Ras en honout, Za'atar

## Nuts and Seeds

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- Almonds, cashews, pine nuts, pistachios, pepitas, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, walnuts
- Delicious on their own, but integral in making flavorful sauces like pesto, picada, muhammara
- Whether raw or lightly toasted further enhances their flavor—will liven up any salad; are an ideal addition to a bowl of fruit and yogurt.
- Perfect on the go snack when paired with dried or fresh fruit.
- Aiding in everything from circulation to inflammation, to bone strength, and digestion.



## Fruits

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- Whole fresh fruit is ever-present in the Mediterranean.
- Apples, apricots, avocados, cherries, clementines, dates, figs, grapefruits, grapes, melons, nectarines, oranges, peaches, pears, pomegranates, strawberries, tangerines.
- Studies have shown that the pomegranate fruit as well as its juice, extract, and oil exert anti-inflammatory, anti-proliferative, and anti-tumorigenic properties by modulating multiple signaling pathways.
- Anthocyanins, polyphenols, melatonin, calcium and potassium, vitamin C, fiber.
- Enjoyed as sweet treat for dessert because they are local, imparting the best flavor.

# Resources

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## Resources

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### **Oldways:**

<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

### **AICR Overview of the Mediterranean Diet:**

<https://www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/food-facts/mediterranean-diet/>

**Meal Delivery Options:** Sunbasket, Green Chef, Daily Harvest, Blue Apron

**DASH diet:** <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>

# Recipes

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