

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

MEDITERRANEAN DIET



What is the Mediterranean Diet?

The Mediterranean diet is a joyful way of eating that honors healthy, real, whole foods while keeping a strong focus on flavor and the pleasure of the table.

Beyond a dietary approach, it's a lifestyle that pertains to the ancient customs and dietary patterns that have existed in the Mediterranean region for thousands of years.

The Mediterranean diet wasn't built as a weight loss plan — in fact, because it wasn't developed at all but is a style of eating in a region of people that evolved naturally over centuries, there's no official way to follow it. But it's popular because it's a well-balanced, healthy approach to eating that isn't restrictive.

Also, worth noting is two of the five blue zones where people live longer and have lower rates of disease are located in Mediterranean cities; Ikaria in Greece and Sardinia in Italy.



Health Benefits

Possibly due to a diet **rich in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants**, people who live in the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea including Turkey, Greece, Spain, Italy, France, Tunisia, Lebanon, Egypt, etc. have maintained remarkable health and longevity.

Numerous studies have shown that the Mediterranean diet has been linked to many health benefits including;

- reduces inflammation
- promotes heart health
- helps prevent heart attacks, strokes, and type 2 diabetes
- supports healthy blood sugar levels
- helps maintain a healthy weight
- reduces depressive symptoms



What do you eat on a traditional Mediterranean diet?

Although there are no strict rules for this way of eating and the ingredients slightly vary in different countries, the Mediterranean diet is a plant-based diet that focuses on eating real, seasonal, whole foods. Traditionally, it contains the following;

- **Vegetables:** tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, onions, garlic, broccoli, spinach, lettuce, green beans, peas, cauliflower, carrots, potatoes, turnips, spring onions, eggplants, artichoke, zucchini, cabbage, mushroom
- **Fruits:** olives, lemon, apples, bananas, oranges, mandarins, pears, strawberries, grapes, dates, figs, melons, peaches, watermelon, pomegranates, apricots, plums, cherries, dates
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, pistachios
- **Legumes:** beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas
- **Whole grains:** bulgur, farro, rye, barley, rice, buckwheat, couscous
- **Fish and seafood:** sea bass, sea bream, sardines, red mullet, white grouper, conger eel, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, octopus, mussel
- **Poultry:** pasture-raised chicken
- **Red meat:** grass-fed lean beef (no more than 1-2 times a week)
- **Dairy:** cheese, yogurt, milk



- **Pasture-raised eggs**
- **Herbs:** basil, parsley, mint, thyme, rosemary, sage, dill, arugula
- **Spices:** cinnamon, chili pepper, paprika, sumac, cumin, turmeric, nutmeg, allspice
- **Healthy fats:** extra virgin olive oil
- **Fermented foods:** pickles, kefir
- **Beverages:** water, tea, coffee, kefir, wine

What else can we add to a Mediterranean diet from the other parts of the world?

- **Vegetables:** sweet potato, kale, pumpkin, squash
- **Fruits:** avocado, blueberry, raspberry, mango, coconut, papaya
- **Nuts, and seeds:** cashew, peanut butter, chia seeds
- **Whole grains:** quinoa, brown rice, whole-wheat bread
- **Fish and seafood:** salmon, scallops, oysters, clams, crab
- **Healthy fats:** avocado oil, coconut oil, ghee (not very often)
- **Herbs:** cilantro
- **Fermented foods:** sauerkraut, kimchi



Foods to avoid:

You should avoid these foods not only when following the Mediterranean diet but anytime for a healthier life;

- **Sugar:** added sugar that is found in many processed foods especially high in soda, candies, syrups, baked goods, artificial sweeteners
- **Trans fats:** found in margarine, fried foods, and other processed foods
- **Refined oils:** hydrogenated oils, soybean oil, canola oil, vegetable oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil
- **Processed meat:** processed sausages, bacon, hot dogs, deli meats, beef jerky
- **Highly processed foods:** fast food, convenience frozen meals
- **Coloring agents:** Certain coloring agents, such as Yellow 6



7 Steps to Follow the Mediterranean Diet

1. Buy a good quality extra virgin olive oil and start using it as your primary cooking oil.
2. Eliminate fast and processed foods.
3. Eat a variety of colorful vegetables, fruits, and nuts every day.
4. Eat at least 1 or 2 fish or seafood-based meals every week.
5. Reduce your red meat intake - no more than 1-2 times a week.
6. Be mindful of your sugar consumption. Swap the white sugar with natural sweeteners including dates, honey, coconut sugar, and maple syrup.
7. Include more herbs and spices in your meals for flavor.



5 Principles of Mediterranean Lifestyle

We can't achieve optimal health and well-being by only focusing on the diet. As human beings, we are complex bio-individuals. It's not just the food we eat that affects our health, but all of the other factors present in our daily lives.

Regular physical activity, healthy relationships, a fulfilling job that we love, our home environment, and even our spiritual practices are essential forms of nourishment.

What makes the Mediterranean people the healthiest in the world is not only their diet but also their lifestyle. When you go to the Mediterranean region, get away from the touristy areas, and spend some time in small villages, you will see people gathered to help their neighbors pick olives or grapes for wine.



You will watch families getting their exercise by picking greens or herbs for teas and then you will be invited to eat with the family and the extended family.

It is a joyful way of living and it is something to aspire to not only for our physical health but also for our emotional and spiritual well-being.

I have put together some principles of living the Mediterranean way below.

1. Eat with your loved ones.

Two aspects that characterize the Mediterranean diet are “what” and “how” you eat. Mediterranean people believe that meals are a time and space for connecting to each other, having pleasant conversations, and socializing with friends. Sharing your meals with significant people also helps you eat more slowly and enjoy your food more.



2. Move naturally.

The world's healthiest and longest-lived people don't run marathons or lift weights at the gym. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They walk to the stores instead of driving and they work every day in their gardens.

Moving our bodies in a way that feels good to us every day is essential. You don't have to spend an hour at the gym every day. The movement should be enjoyable for you to stick to it. There are different kinds of physical activities and it's absolutely possible to find the ones you love.



3. Spend time outdoors.

Another healthy habit that Mediterranean people have is that they spend a lot of time outdoors.

Most of us have jobs that tie us to our desks indoors, but intentionally scheduling time for going out to get some fresh air and natural sunlight is necessary for our physical and mental well-being. It has so many incredible health benefits including boosting your mood by increasing the serotonin and endorphin levels.



4. Learn to downshift.

Stress leads to chronic inflammation which is associated with every major disease. Mediterranean people have routines to shed stress in their daily lives. For example; Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour.

Our stressful 9 to 5 jobs and chaotic lives in the cities may not let us downshift like people in the Mediterranean, but we can certainly find ways to slow down and reduce stress in our lives, including doing yoga, meditation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises.

5. Prioritize social connections.

Family and friends have always played a very important role for the people of the Mediterranean. We love to be surrounded by others, to laugh, talk, listen, and help.

As humans, social interaction is essential to every aspect of our health. Research from Framingham Studies shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious. Isolation and loneliness can lead to so many health issues such as depression, heart disease, and dementia.

Knowing that we are loved and supported by others is a positive psychological factor that helps us deal with the negative aspects of life.





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**Let's get you started on your journey to vibrant
health with the Mediterranean diet in 28 days!**

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to me at
selen@holistikanutrition.com

