

The Mediterranean Diet with your mouth full

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Image courtesy of [BROWSER](#) on flickr.

What is it?

A food pattern shared by countries that rim the Mediterranean Sea. No official Mediterranean diet.

- Spain
- Italy
- Greece
- Turkey
- North Africa
- Israel
- Lebanon



Image courtesy of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#).

When was it coined?

1958 Ancel Keys organized 7 countries study: Finland, USA, Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Greece , Italy, Japan.

It showed:

A lower prevalence of hypercholesterolemia and heart disease in populations of Greece and Italy especially the Greek Island of Crete, which he attributed to diet.

More studies to test hypothesis

- Framingham Heart Study
- Nurses' Health Study
- Women's Health Initiative

Conclusion and Discussion:

Plant fats yield better cardiovascular health than animal fats.

Review of 13 studies since 2004

- There is strong evidence that replacing saturated fats with monounsaturated fats (MUFA) is associated with reducing cardiovascular mortalities:

Reducing LDL Cholesterol(bad cholesterol)

Decrease in blood triglycerides

Reducing Inflammation

- Strong evidence that MUFA are associated with improving Type 2 diabetes - less insulin resistant

More Health Benefits.....

- Reduce risk of Alzheimer's
- Reduce risk Parkinson's
- Reduce risk depression
- Reduce risk of diabetes
- Improve brain cognition
- Protect against some cancers (breast, prostate)
- Live longer
- Weight loss

Less Inflammation, Oxidative Stress with Med Diet

- Italian researchers studied the diets of 131 healthy adults, and rated each person's diet for overall adherence to a traditional Mediterranean Diet. They compared this "Mediterranean Diet Score" to blood test results of cholesterol and triglycerides, antioxidant levels, immune system function and oxidative stress. They found that those with a higher Med Diet Score had less inflammation, reduced oxidative stress, and higher circulating levels of antioxidants, all of which are associated with reduced risk of disease. [Nutrition Journal, November 16, 2011; 10\(1\):125 \[Epub ahead of print\] \(Azzini et al.\)](#)

Protective Effects of Mediterranean Diet against Prostate Cancer

- In a meta-analysis of the relationship between diet and prostate cancer, scientists in Valencia, Spain reviewed existing studies. They found that prostate cancer is reduced in men on the Mediterranean Diet compared with those on a typical Western diet. They cited several characteristics of the Med Diet, including high daily consumption of fruits, vegetables, grains, tubers and legumes; olive oil as the main source of fats; low intake of animal products; regular consumption of small fish; and small amounts of wine with meals. [Actas Urologicas Españas, September 27 2011 \[Epub ahead of print\]](#)

Eating a diet with omega-3 fatty acids can improve insulin sensitivity.

- Abete, I., D. Parra, A.B. Crujeiras, E. Goyenechea, and J.A. Martinez. "Specific insulin sensitivity and leptin responses to a nutritional treatment of obesity via a combination of energy restriction and fatty fish intake." *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 21.6 (Dec 2008): 591(10).

Adherence to a Mediterranean diet is associated with a reduced risk of diabetes.

- Martínez-González MA, Fuente-Arrillaga C, Nunez-Cordoba JM, et al. Adherence to Mediterranean diet and risk of developing diabetes: prospective cohort study. British Journal of Medicine. 2008.

Eating a Mediterranean-style diet rich in olive oil, whole grains, fish and fruit may protect aging brains from damage associated with cognitive problems

- After reviewing brain MRI's of 712 octogenarians, researchers found that those following the Med Diet the most closely were up to 36% less likely to show brain damage from small strokes.
- Nikolaos Scarmeas, M.D, associate professor, clinical neurology, Taub Institute, Columbia University Medical Center, New York City; Connie Diekman, R.D., director, university nutrition, Washington University in St. Louis; scheduled presentation, American Academy of Neurology annual meeting, Toronto, April 10-17, 2010

Olive Oil May Be Protective Against Strokes

Older people who consume plenty of olive oil may reduce their risk of stroke by as much as 41%. That's the conclusion of researchers from the University of Bordeaux, who followed more than 7,000 people over the age of 65, in the French cities of Bordeaux, Dijon, and Montpellier, for more than five years.

Compared to those who seldom or never used olive oil, those with the heaviest self-reported use of olive oil lowered their risk of suffering a stroke during the five-year duration of the study from 2.6% to 1.5% – a 41% drop.

[Neurology](#), June 15, 2011 [Epub ahead of print]

What is it about the Mediterranean diet



Diet Characteristics of the Mediterranean

Fat: olive oil, olives, (monounsaturated fats/ omega 9 oleocanthal)

Nuts, seeds, (polyunsaturated fats/omega 6)

Fish especially small fish (omega 3 fatty acids)

Fresh fruits and fresh vegetables are prominent

Legumes: beans, lentils, (plant protein)

Fresh herbs and spices: oregano, basil, parsley, dill, mint

Plain yogurt/cheese (fermented)

Whole grains

Red wine

Less saturated fat via meats (portion/frequency) butter, milk, cream

Less salty and sweet snack processed foods

Common Herbs and Spices

All have powerful antioxidants, vitamins, minerals

Fresh Garlic- allicin, sulfur compound

Fresh Parsley- antioxidants, flavonoids, vitamins C, A

Fresh Basil

Fresh Dill

Fresh Mint

Fresh Oregano

Fresh Fennel

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

- Visit Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust's [Mediterranean Diet Pyramid](#).

Mediterranean Diet Characteristics

Lifestyle and behaviors around foods

No eating /snacking in front of TV

Sharing of plates at the evening meal

Smaller plates

Main meal in day with nap after

Lots of walking

Common Food Patterns of Greece

- Real food – less fast convenience and processed foods
- No snack foods – especially packaged (chips, bars)
- Main meal is eaten in the day 2 pm
- Meat is smaller part of meal – one pot meals
- Lots of vegetable dishes in olive oil as main entrée
- Fruit is the dessert, no desserts after meals
- Sweets are eaten alone - afternoon and occasions not as dessert after dinner.

Common Traditional Greek Foods

- Giant baked beans (not new england style)
- Stewed green beans
- White bean soup
- Stuffed grape leaves/collard leaves (rice based)
- Baked/grilled whole fish oil/lemon (no butter, sauce)
- Boiled greens - as a side topped with oil/lemon
- Lentil soup
- Spinach Pie

Giant Baked Beans with Spinach



Braised green beans, potatoes



Braised Peas and Escarole



White bean soup



Spanish Paella



Stuffed grape leaves and squash blossoms



Greek Salad

what is different?



Caprese salad



How to get it in America?

- Cook and eat home more often.
- Eat vegetarian 1-2 times week....not isolated soy protein.
Try an Mediterranean dish: falafel, hommus, bean soup
- Use extra virgin olive oil for cooking, salads, vegetables, eggs
- Steam leafy green vegies like escarole, chard, rabe add oil/lemon
- Make your own salad dressing with real olive oil.
- Reduce intake of dessert foods. Only on weekends or only on an occasion.
- Eat plain yogurt and add your own fresh fruit and honey
- Have meat be small part of the meal: stew
- Eat fish with bones small fish....smelts, sardines, anchovies
- Snack less on packaged foods bars, boxed foods. Have a handful of nuts instead, fruit, yogurt

What can you do now ?

- What 1 item would you like to change about your diet that would lead you closer to a Mediterranean diet?

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