



Nutrition
Guide to The
Mediterranean
Diet

A MIRBEAU BALANCED GUIDE



The Mediterranean Diet

A HISTORY OF HEALTH

The Mediterranean diet is one of the oldest diets in the world, shown to promote overall health and cardiovascular function as well as many other benefits. With a key focus on overall nutrient-dense food, the Mediterranean diet emphasizes an abundance of plant foods, moderation, and food as a communal, shared experience.

Over 5,000 Years Old

The Mediterranean diet is considered by many to be one of the healthiest ways of eating in the world. It has evolved over 5,000 years and has been shaped by regional environment and culture with a focus on local and seasonal foods (2).

Longevity & Vitality in the Blue Zones

The Blue Zones of the world are communities where people not only tend to live exceptionally long lives but also enjoy a high quality of life and vitality in their old age. There you will find the highest percent of centenarians, which are people living into their hundreds. Two of the identified Blue Zones naturally following a Mediterranean diet and lifestyle are Sardina, Italy and Ikaria, Greece. However there are commonalities among all of the discovered zones despite their distance apart on the globe. These similarities are an abundance of plants, beans, whole grains, and healthy fats.



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Health BENEFITS

The Mediterranean diet has been intensely researched for more than 50 years. Hundreds of studies since have documented a variety of health benefits, including reduced risk of heart disease, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, certain cancers, depression, and in older adults, a decreased risk of frailty, along with better mental and physical function (6).



Cardiovascular Health

Supporting heart health is more important now than ever with Cardiovascular disease on the rise over the last few decades. The heart benefits from the Mediterranean diet have been widely studied, with some of the most convincing evidence emerging from a study that followed 7,000 men and women following the diet over five years. The findings showed that those who consumed extra-virgin olive oil or nuts every day had about a 30 percent lower risk of heart events than the control group who did not intentionally consume these heart-healthy fats (4).

Prevent Cognitive Decline

There is encouraging evidence that a Mediterranean diet, typically abundant in plants and low in saturated fat, is associated with improved cognition, slowed cognitive decline, and reduced chance of developing cognitive disease (4). The best results occur when diet is combined with other healthy lifestyle practices such as daily movement and a strong sense of community that the Mediterranean lifestyle exemplifies.

Healthy Weight

Since the Mediterranean diet focuses on whole, fresh foods, it may help you lose weight in a safe, healthy, and sustainable way in contrast to restrictive crash diets that are only sustainable short-term. A study found that those who followed the diet were twice as likely to maintain weight loss (4). While some staple foods in the diet like nuts and olive oil can be high-calorie, the key is to simply practice portion control in order to reap their amazing health benefits while still feeling satisfied. This diet preaches moderation, not restriction.

Reduce Inflammation

Certain properties of the Mediterranean diet, including the abundance of unsaturated omega-3 fats found in fatty fish, nuts, seeds, and more may help relieve autoimmune disease symptoms such as joint pain and swelling in patients with Rheumatoid arthritis (4). Inflammation is at the root of many chronic diseases, so it makes sense that introducing foods that combat inflammation while reducing those that do the opposite have the potential to help us in our health and wellbeing in ways that could benefit us in both short and long term.



Mediterranean GUIDELINES



Plant-Forward

A good rule of thumb is to aim for plants, vegetables and fruits to make up most of your meal, as often as you can. Add in a whole grain, quality protein, and source of healthy fats for a perfectly balanced meal to help you feel satisfied and energized.

Staple Foods

- Vegetables**
- Fruits**
- Beans & Legumes** (lentils, peas, cannellini, black, garbanzo, etc.)
- Whole Grains** (wheat, quinoa, barley, brown rice, oats, farro, etc.)
- Fish & Seafood** (salmon, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, oysters, etc.)
- Poultry** (chicken, turkey, etc. - opt for lean cuts most often)
- Dairy** (greek yogurt, cottage cheese, feta cheese, goat, etc.)
- Nuts** (almonds, walnuts, pistachios, cashews, brazil, etc.)
- Seeds** (hemp, pumpkin, sunflower, chia, etc.)
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil**
- Herbs & Spices**

In Moderation

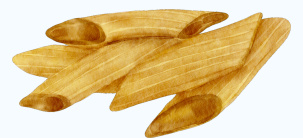
- Red Meat**
- Eggs**
- Red Wine**

Limit or Avoid

- Over-processed Foods & Meat**
- Fried Foods**
- Refined Foods**
- Added Sugars**



Choosing nutritious BREAD & PASTA

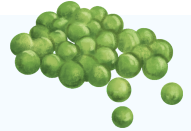


Swap refined grains like white bread for whole wheat, whole grain, or sprouted grain bread. Sourdough is also a great option that benefits digestive health. When it comes to pasta, swap in whole wheat varieties as often as you can. If you cannot tolerate gluten, there are a variety of new pastas on the market that consist of brown rice or quinoa, and even beans or lentils! Not only will this keep your palette entertained but it will help bring a variety of nutrients into your diet. Try to get in the habit of checking ingredient lists any time you buy packaged food and opt for short lists with ingredients you can recognize.

Mediterranean GUIDELINES CONTINUED

Beans, Legumes, & the Power of Fiber

Beans are the cornerstone of every longevity diet in the world, with people in the Blue Zones eating at least 4x as many beans as Americans do on average (1). Beans and lentils are one of the highest plant sources of fiber which is well known for its benefits to digestion and regularity, but its power goes far beyond that. Diets rich in soluble fiber (the type of fiber found in beans and lentils) improve function of the gut, kidneys, and liver, which have the potential to improve the microbiome and detoxification (5). Fiber also reduces the risk of heart disease and may help with weight management. Beans also provide protein, B vitamins, iron, copper, magnesium, manganese, zinc, and phosphorous. If you are not used to a high fiber diet, you can always start small and slowly increase consumption over a few weeks to reduce discomforts some may experience when increasing fiber too quickly.



Experiment with Different Cuisines

Many people associate the Mediterranean diet with Italian, Greek, and Sicilian foods. Think outside of the box and imagine ways to turn any cuisine into a Mediterranean-inspired meal. For example, a homemade chickpea curry is not only delicious and nourishing but it consists of beans, vegetables, and lots of anti-inflammatory spices. Pair it with rice or whole grain pita and you have the perfect meal following the same guidelines outlined on the previous page. Another idea may be a shrimp or bean "burrito" bowl consisting of lettuce, peppers, and guacamole.

Ditch the "All or Nothing" Mentality

Instead of viewing these guidelines as strict rules you must follow in order to reap the benefits, try to view it as inspiration for small but attainable steps you can make to shift your diet into a more nutritious place! We are all unique in what our bodies require to function at its best, so it often takes trial and error to find what works best for you as the unique individual that you are. The overarching theme of the Mediterranean diet preaches more plant-forward food choices and less over processed food, which we can all agree are positive shifts to strive for. Like we say at Mirbeau, it is all about *balance* of life's pleasures.

Meal Prep Idea!

Falafel with salad, olive oil roasted vegetables,
chickpeas and herbed rice

Mediterranean MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast

- Oatmeal or overnight oats with berries or banana, and nuts or seeds
- Greek yogurt or cottage cheese with fresh fruit, walnuts, granola, and a drizzle of honey
- Whole grain toast with avocado, sautéed spinach, tomato, and eggs
- Smoothie made with banana, spinach, plant protein powder or greek yogurt, nut butter and flax



Lunch & Dinner

- Quinoa, with tuna, kale (massaged with olive oil and lemon), feta, cucumber and tomato
- Lentils and rice with tabouli (salad of finely chopped parsley, tomatoes and onions)
- Bolognese sauce with whole wheat pasta and a side salad with olive-oil based dressing
- Grilled vegetable, shrimp and chicken kabobs with baked sweet potato
- Veggie soup made with carrots, celery, onion, garlic, spinach, beans, potatoes and broth
- Butternut squash, carrot and lentil soup purée with whole grain or sourdough toast
- Whole wheat spaghetti with shrimp, squid, sautéed tomatoes, garlic, spinach and olive oil
- Easy weeknight salmon with roasted vegetables and a cooked grain
(see next page for recipe!)



Snacks

- Fresh fruit
- Handful of nuts or seeds
- Hummus with vegetables and whole grain crackers
- Homemade popcorn
- Greek yogurt with berries
- Medjool dates stuffed with nut butter, topped with nuts (*great healthy dessert!*)
- Crispy Roasted Chickpeas



Crispy Roasted Chickpeas

This crunchy, high-fiber snack doubles as a fantastic topper to salads and bowls! To make, rinse and drain canned chickpeas (aka garbanzo beans) and roll them gently between a clean dish towel to remove all moisture. Once fully dried, toss them with extra virgin olive oil, salt, and any spices of your choice. Spread them on a parchment-lined baking sheet and roast at 400F for 25-35 minutes, shaking the pan every so often, until crispy and golden.



Mediterranean MEAL IDEAS



Easy Weeknight Salmon

Cooked 3 Ways

Salmon is a Mediterranean staple, easy to make any night of the week! Rich in heart healthy omega-3 fats along with vitamins A, D, B-6, B-12, and a variety of essential minerals.

Pair it with one of the complimenting toppings on the next page, a side of roasted vegetables and a grain, and you have yourself a delicious and balanced meal.

BAKED

- 1 Lightly coat salmon with olive oil and a little salt.
- 2 Bake uncovered at 400F for 8-12 minutes depending on thickness and desired temperature (*medium or medium rare*)

STEAMED

- 1 Lightly oil and salt the salmon. Layer your choice of fresh herbs or greens, salmon, lemon and other seasonings onto foil. Create a "pouch" around the salmon. Add a couple tablespoons of water or white wine to the pouch and seal it. Be sure to leave space within and avoid wrapping the foil too tightly.
- 2 Bake at 400F for 8-12 minutes.

PAN SEARED

- 1 Salt room temperature salmon to taste. Heat oil over medium heat in a pan.
- 2 Place salmon skin side up and cook for about four minutes. Avoid moving or touching it as much as possible.
- 3 Flip and cook for an additional 3-4 minutes until desired temperature is reached (*medium or medium rare*).

Mediterranean MEAL IDEAS

Easy Weeknight Salmon

3 Toppings

Mango Salsa

1 mango
1/4 cup red onion
1 tbsp cilantro
1 tbsp lime juice
1/2 cup bell pepper of choice
1 jalapeno
Salt & pepper to taste

To make, dice the mango, onion and peppers, chop the cilantro, and combine all ingredients until blended.

Healthy Tzatziki

1/2 cup greek yogurt
1/2 cup english cucumber
2 tbsp fresh dill
1 garlic clove
1 tsp olive oil
1 tsp lemon juice
Salt & pepper to taste

To make, chop or grate the cucumber, chop the garlic, and combine all ingredients until blended.

Basil Pesto

12 packed cups basil leaves
2 garlic cloves, peeled
1/4 cup walnuts
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/4 cup parmesan cheese*
1 tsp lemon juice
Salt & pepper to taste

To make, combine all ingredients in food processor and pulse until smooth.

**substitute for nutritional yeast or omit for dairy-free pesto*

IDEAS FOR SIDES

To prepare **roasted vegetables**, wash and chop, toss lightly with olive oil, salt, and any of your favorite spices. Spread evenly on a baking sheet and roast at 400F for 20-30 minutes, tossing half way through.

Some wonderful **grains** to pair with salmon depending on your preference include nutritious and chewy farro, nutty brown rice, and fluffy quinoa. Each may be cooked with their package instructions.





BETTER *Together*

Food as Communal

In the Mediterranean way, meals are encouraged to be shared and enjoyed with others. Not only can it benefit social health, but it forces us to slow down during our meals and savor our food more intentionally. In the fast paced world we live in today, many of us are rushing through meals or eating while we are distracted behind our screens. Being present with each bite and those we care about can lead to greater connection, happiness and health. While eating together may not be possible all the time, remembering the Mediterranean values and striving to sprinkle in more mindful, screen-free, and communal eating here and there is a wonderful place to start.

The Mediterranean Lifestyle

In addition to a diet abundant in fresh food and eating mindfully with others, the mediterranean lifestyle consists of regular daily movement. Back in the day, this sometimes looked like tending to a farm or garden and walking to and from places instead of driving cars. In modern day, this could be achieved by daily or weekly exercise, walking or biking instead of driving when possible, taking breaks to stretch and walk if your job requires a lot of sitting, and active play with children or pets at home. Regardless of how to choose to move, all movement is good for you and will benefit your mental and physical health in the long run!

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Admin (2023) Food guidelines, Blue Zones.
<https://www.bluezones.com/recipes/food-guidelines/>
- (2) The Mediterranean diet - an up-close look at its origins in Pantelleria. Today's Dietitian.
<https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/050113p28.shtml#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20Mediterranean%20diet%20is%20a,researchers%20who%20attended%20the%20conference>
- (3) Understanding the Mediterranean diet: Recipes, meal plans & more.
<https://health.usnews.com/best-diet/mediterranean-diet>
- (4) Bedosky, L. et al. 8 scientific health benefits of the Mediterranean diet, EverydayHealth.com. Available at:
<https://www.everydayhealth.com/mediterranean-diet/scientific-health-benefits-mediterranean-diet/>
- (5) Kieffer DA, Martin RJ, Adams SH. Impact of Dietary Fibers on Nutrient Management and Detoxification Organs: Gut, Liver, and Kidneys. *Adv Nutr.* 2016 Nov 15;7(6):1111-1121. doi: 10.3945/an.116.013219. PMID: 28140328; PMCID: PMC5105045.
- (6) Katherine D. McManus, M. (2023, March 22). A practical guide to the mediterranean diet. Harvard Health. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/a-practical-guide-to-the-mediterranean-diet-2019032116194>