

Lose Weight, Feel Great Mediterranean Diet

By Rick Helvey

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, including scanning, photocopying, or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder. Direct Focus, LLC Copyright © 2018

Lose Weight, Feel Great Mediterranean Diet	1
Introduction	4
The Mediterranean Diet	5
Why Enjoy the Mediterranean Diet?	7
Fat, Sugar, and Salt	11
Stress and Body Fat	11
What is the Mediterranean Diet?	12
How to Make Change Stick.....	13
Moral Licensing	13
Progressive Extremism	14
Habits, Mindfulness, and Behavioral Economics	14
Mindfulness	15
Measurement	16
Getting Started	18
Mindful Eating	20
Portion Control	21
Meal Times.....	21
Eating Out.....	22
Traveling.....	23
Weight Loss.....	25
Intermittent Fasting	28
Mediterranean Diet Guidelines	31
Mediterranean Diet Pyramid.....	32
Get Started Groceries	33
Food Groups	34
Grains.....	34
Vegetables	34
Fruits.....	36

Nuts.....	38
Legumes.....	39
Dairy	41
Why Greek Yogurt?.....	42
Fish and other Seafood	43
Oils.....	43
Meats.....	45
Anemia.....	46
Superfoods.....	46
Exercise	47
Useful Tips.....	48
Roasting Vegetables.....	50
Commonly Used Mediterranean Diet Herbs	52
Plans for Those with Non-Dieting Family Members	52
The Best Bread Recipe	53
Breakfast.....	55
Some suggestion for breakfast.....	57
Smoothies	57
Guidelines for smoothies	58
Smoothie Recipes	59
Breakfast Recipes	63
Lunch Recipes	65
Supper Recipes	71
Dessert Recipes	77
Sweets	77
Conclusion	79

Introduction

I got started with the Mediterranean Diet unintentionally. In 1979 my friend Bob and I saved up a little cash, flew to Rome, Italy, bought bicycles and camped our way up the coast to the far side of France. We camped for six weeks in total. If we had eaten our meals in restaurants, we would have run out of money in about six days, making for a very short trip. So we adapted and did something different to lengthen our trip.

What made sense was to drink a lot of water and eat the abundant inexpensive fresh produce that we found all along the way. We got our protein from nuts and beans, cooked pasta to go with our veggies, and stayed strong and healthy the entire time. We were faithful to Mediterranean Diet out of necessity and it worked very well for us.

At the time I did not recognize how well I felt eating this way, we were busy riding, sightseeing, and finding safe places to camp and it was hard to separate the effect of our diet from the general excitement and challenges of traveling.

However a few years later I started training for triathlons. A common training day included running 5 miles to a nearby river, swimming a mile, then running back. I found very quickly that my body would simply not tolerate some common foods I had been eating my whole life. I had already given up pork; I then eliminated beef and cut way back on poultry. My seafood consumption stayed about the same, so my calories were now comprised mostly of legumes, nuts, pasta, breads, cheese, and vegetables.

This brought me closer to the Mediterranean Diet ideal, making it easier to later reduce dairy, breads, and processed food.

The Mediterranean Diet

If you have been paying attention to diet and nutrition advice at any point in the last five decades the Mediterranean diet will have been mentioned. During that time many contender diets have been promoted, usually as a way to sell books or meal plans. Some of the more popular ones include Weight Watchers, Jenny Craig, Nutrisystem, South Beach, Paleo, Zone, Vegan, and Ketogenic. Through all of the testimonials and billions of dollars spent by people trying valiantly to lose weight, The Mediterranean Diet remains the easiest to follow and for that reason the most sustainable diet anywhere. Although the diet is usually considered to be the traditional food of the countries Italy, Greece and Spain; many other countries that border the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere have contributed their delicious cuisine to us. Fusing ingredients and recipes from other parts of the world is not only possible, but highly encouraged. Anytime you have fresh ingredients that are mostly plant based you have the chance to dine the Mediterranean way.

What is it that makes the Mediterranean Diet the healthiest and most sustainable diet?

The Mediterranean diet emphasizes fresh vegetables and fruits, beans, legumes, nuts, whole grains, seafood and fish with occasional poultry or red meat. Other essential elements are the use of extra virgin olive oil, moderating portions, reducing dairy products, and using herbs for seasoning instead of salt.

With the Mediterranean Diet pork, red meat, and even poultry are used sparingly, moving those of us who practice this way of eating toward a plant based diet. Meals are based on vegetarian and seafood primarily, with beef, pork, mutton, poultry and other animal based meats being used more occasionally.

Moving to this diet reduces the amount of chemicals and the less healthy fats that are found in animal products, a good first step toward a healthy life. Other proteins are substituted for animal meat, primarily legumes and

beans used in hundreds of delicious, creative ways that are consistent with the local culture and the availability of certain ingredients. Hummus for instance is made from garbanzo beans, and each locale throughout the region has their particular way of preparing it, giving us many varieties of this simple dish.

The fresh ingredients and way of preparing food ensures you are eating and drinking ample antioxidants, healthy fats, vitamins, and fiber, and improving digestion and the absorption of nutrients. Perhaps just as important is the way of eating with the focus on social sharing while dining, a slower pace at meals, and the enjoyment of preparing and serving wholesome food.

If you have ever seen the movie *Stealing Beauty* it is clear that the folks in the Tuscany region take their meals seriously. While we don't all enjoy the lifestyle they seem to have there, we can make adjustments like always eating in a place in the home reserved for dining, avoiding distractions while eating, not rushing through our meals, appreciating the (possible) artistry of the meal preparation, and understanding that slowing down should mean eating less, but enjoying just as much!



Why Enjoy the Mediterranean Diet?

The Mediterranean Diet returns us to eating only the foods found in nature in appealing and healthy combinations. This means we are replacing modern processed food and drinks with only the foods and drink that were available centuries ago.

The research on the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet is well chronicled from studies old and new. Among the health benefits alone are:

- ❖ Low in Processed Foods and Sugar
- ❖ Improved heart and arterial health
- ❖ Reduced body fat
- ❖ Weight reduction without hunger
- ❖ Lowered blood pressure
- ❖ Improved skin
- ❖ Fights cancer
- ❖ Increase energy
- ❖ Reduced risk of numerous diseases including Type 2 Diabetes, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's
- ❖ Normalization of cholesterol
- ❖ Improved mental clarity and better moods
- ❖ Linked to longevity
- ❖ Fights inflammation, relieves pain
- ❖ Improves fertility

Decades of studies on the efficacy of various diets nearly all come to the conclusion that the Mediterranean Diet continues to be the easiest to follow and healthiest diet. The primary ways this diet helps improve health include:

This diet substitutes unhealthy fats with healthy fats. For example meat and butter are discouraged while oil, particularly extra virgin olive oil takes their place. Replacing saturated fats found in prepackaged foods and animal products with the polyunsaturated fats that can lower bad cholesterol, improve arterial and heart health, promote healthier skin, and increase energy. By making this

change dieters will increase the amount of Omega-3 fatty acids they ingest, with the added vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients helping the body heal and increasing energy.

The Mediterranean Diet gives all of us the opportunity to enjoy an improved quality of life and health while enjoying delicious food.

In addition to the pure nutritional benefit of this Way of Eating (WOE), the other aspects of the Mediterranean Diet including physical activity and meal socialization have demonstrated beneficial results for your heart.

One of the primary benefits is the reduction of oxidized low-density lipoproteins that accumulate as deposits in the arteries of your heart. The inclusion of moderate amounts of red wine has also been linked with reduced heart disease.

Healthy Weight Loss - Ease of maintaining the Mediterranean Diet combined with reduced inflammation, high fiber, portion control, reduced carbohydrates, and exercise can contribute to rapid weight loss.

Improved Cognitive Health - The Mediterranean diet reduces the risk of developing degenerative cognitive and actually improves cognition, including enhancing memory and improving attention and focus.

Reduced Inflammation - The Mediterranean diet can control inflammation and the poor health and diseases associated with oxidative stress.

Healthier Skin - In addition to helping lose weight, reducing inflammation and other benefits, the Mediterranean Diet may also lead to healthier skin. The EVOO this diet recommends is full of vitamin E and antioxidants that hydrate and nourish your skin. Tomatoes help protect skin cells and the resveratrol in red wine is also healthy for you as an antioxidant.



Increased Lifespan - It makes sense that reducing inflammation and the risk of heart disease and all of the other benefits will not only add years to your life, but make those years healthier, more vibrant, just better

Reduces Cancer Risk - Although the results of studies on the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet were somewhat overstated, there is no other diet that does more to reduce the probability of contracting cancer. This is particularly true of postmenopausal breast cancer which has few successful treatment options.

Combats Type 2 Diabetes - Research is continually being done on what WOE is the best for serious conditions like Type 2 diabetes. So far the continues to be most beneficial eating plan for diabetics and persons with high blood sugar. The emphasis on meals rich in monounsaturated fats and high in fiber is what makes the Mediterranean diet the healthiest. The elimination of saturated and trans fats and the substitution with unsaturated fats helps with individual's insulin sensitivity.

Combats Alzheimer's disease - Improved cholesterol, blood sugar levels, and healthier blood vessels reduce or slow the development of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The protection against cognitive decline enables aging adults to preserve quality of life and limits illness.

Combats Parkinson's disease - The antioxidants found in the fruits and vegetables and EVOO keep cells from undergoing the process of damaging oxidative stress that contribute to Parkinson's.

The focus on freshness includes local and means that you may need to visit the farmers market more often, plan with a little more thoughtfulness, and have some flexibility in what is prepared day to day as well as season to season. Most of us have the benefit of having access to local, fresh, and organic produce to base our diets on. My friend Pepe is originally from Barcelona, Spain and settled in Seattle. He makes sport of combing the farmers markets for a wide variety of fresh ingredients from cuisines worldwide. This combined with cooking skill makes for ever more delicious meals when dining with his family. Many enthusiasts are also growing or raising their own produce and herbs, reducing costs and increasing the satisfaction of growing what you eat.

Eating locally and seasonally can help diversify our diets and encourage us to try new foods with new recipes. You may just find a new favorite and at the very least absorb new nutrients and minerals you may have been missing. Each region or locale has their own favorite fruit or vegetable that one anticipates with delight each year, make sure to take full advantage of those. Fruits and vegetables that are locally sourced are also more likely to be picked when ripened, not unripe like produce shipped in from faraway places. Vegetables fruits grains, nuts, legumes, olive oil and dairy products such as cheese, yogurt and milk make up the majority of the daily diet. This ensures that the Mediterranean Diet is rich in protein, fiber, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals.

Most people in Colorado look forward to May and the last snow of the season, because that means the Palisade Peaches

are coming. Although southern peaches are quite tasty, vine ripened Palisade Peaches are a delight, and can be used as a dessert by itself.

Fat, Sugar, and Salt

From earliest human history these three substances have been necessary for survival yet in short supply. Hunters, gatherers, foragers, farmers have provided enough food for humans to survive until now, but developments over the last several hundred years has allowed us to consume unlimited quantities of food and drinks that ravage our bodies. The body craves some amounts of those substances above: fat to store fuel for lean times, sugar to provide energy to run from danger, salt to regulate blood fluids for a healthy heart, liver and kidneys. These are also what the body craves when it is in stress.

Stress and Body Fat

Levels of stress in society are higher than they have ever been and continue to grow each year. This can be attributed to such factors as income inequality, the deleterious effect of social media as well as the increased complexities of life in general. Stress drives us to consume the fat, sugar, and salt because the body feels a sense of relief and security from consuming these three substances. At that point the body is in charge of the mind, seeking relief in a predictable way. Add to that these toxic substances are also the quickest and cheapest way to get that full feeling and easily available and it easy to see why there is a growing epidemic of obesity. All of these substances are now concentrated exponentially and easily available in a wide variety of drinks, snacks, and packaged meals. We serve up pain avoidance and quick and easy relief in the form of sweet, salty, fat or some combination of these toxic substances.

You may have heard of the connection between stress, the stress hormone cortisol and belly fat. The stress of daily life stimulates the release of cortisol into your bloodstream, triggering the body to store belly fat. This

is an automatic response that protected humans when we were in constant physical danger from starvation or predatory animals, but is not useful for most of us in modern life.

Using techniques to reduce stress will have benefits that go far beyond simple weight loss and heart health. Strategies to reduce stress (and stress eating and fat storage include:

- ❖ Meditate or pray for at least 10 minutes per day. This is a proven strategy guaranteed to relieve stress long past the time you are actually doing it.
- ❖ Try to have a good laugh every day.
- ❖ Get adequate and regulated sleep.
- ❖ Learn and practice breathing techniques.
- ❖ Simplify your life.

Our bodies under stress crave food and drink that are not good for us. Reduce your stress and take control until the cravings diminish.

What is the Mediterranean Diet?

WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The Seven Countries Study conducted by Ancel Keys in the 1950's first identified the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet on the health and longevity of populations. This study inspired the Food Pyramid that identifies the portions and frequency of consumption of various foods. Subsequent studies have validated the findings and identified the deleterious effects of less healthy diets or WOE.

Most of the foods you eat should be natural, unprocessed Mediterranean staples or their equivalents. Make sure include a wide variety of

ingredients and colors to ensure that you're getting a balance of nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Whole, single ingredient foods are essential for making the most of your Mediterranean lifestyle

Here are some things that the Mediterranean Diet are not:

- ❖ Restricting or counting calories
- ❖ Depriving yourself or using self-control to lose weight
- ❖ Combining foods in just the right way
- ❖ Fasting (although I do and you can too!)
- ❖ Eating or drinking the same tasteless food or drink ad nausea

Eating plenty of fresh produce is the key to the Mediterranean diet. Try to have at least five servings each day, a serving being approximately one cup of raw produce. Healthy fats from things like olive oil, nuts, fish, and avocado are also crucial. Drink plenty of water, coffee and tea, and a glass of red wine most days. Consult the Food Pyramid and Diet Guidelines below for a fuller description of what to eat each day

How to Make Change Stick

Change is hard and to make your new Way of Eating persist there are several effective strategies that I recommend you use. Diets train us to anticipate scarcity both physically and emotionally. What steps can we take to banish the habits that do not serve us and our health? It is best to understand the psychology of change and for this we can draw the latest research on effectively improving your wellbeing.

Moral Licensing

One thing that affects many of us is called moral licensing. An example of this behavior is using our limited will power to exercise for an hour straight burning 350 calories, and then rewarding ourselves with a fountain drink to slake our thirst. A Big Gulp soda with ice weighs in at

364 calories with no nutritional value. Most of us are conditioned to offset our sacrifice with rewards, and in most cases those rewards driven by what the body expects to feel, a rush of sugar, fat, or salt that provides comfort.

Progressive Extremism

Will power is limited and should be conserved and used sparingly. One way I and others use to conserve will power while accomplishing goals is to change the mindset and self-identify differently. This can be as simple as declaring to yourself and those that matter that “I am not someone who eats meat or fast food, or drinks sodas. This will be easy to do on day one and two, then more difficult during the following week. This may seem extreme but by eliminating unwanted habits you will reduce the stress of failing to make your commitments. If this is something you intend to follow through on then progressively eliminate this first thing, then move on to others. Another way to think of it is if asked the question, do you eat meat then the answer goes from “I can’t” previously to “I don’t”. This tactic is called progressive extremism.

Habits, Mindfulness, and Behavioral Economics

What is behavioral economics and why is it part of a book about the Mediterranean Diet? The reason is that many people finding this book will be changing from their current WOE and lifestyle and to make it work and persist will need to do so effectively. I am going to share a few of the more recent advances in effectively changing behaviors that will make for an easier and more successful outcome. In a nutshell, Behavioral Economics recognizes typical human behavior and provides structures that make it easier to make the right choice. A well-known example of this is placing fruit prominently at the entrance of the school cafeteria while chips and other unhealthy snacks are placed near the end of the line. The results of a simple rearrangement are astounding, and you can do this for yourself. Stop for a moment and think of four or five ways you can do to

immediately make it easier to make better choices of what to eat, and when. This might mean throwing out temptations like ice cream, having your favorite fruit on hand, keeping cold water in the fridge, cutting out that cup of sweet coffee or tea in the morning.



Mindfulness

Another effective strategy for changing habits is the mindfulness skills of attentiveness and curiosity. Recognizing that some habit or craving was formed for a reason, and if it is not in your best interest the reason is probably no longer valid. Instead of swinging by the fast food window on your way home from work, you might stop and think about what it will do for you. Identify the trigger that is encouraging the habit; sugar craving, low blood sugar, convenience, costs, weariness, or other. Get curious about what would happen if you reflected on the craving instead of acting upon it, then went on to prepare and eat a healthy Mediterranean meal. Reflecting on the outcome while realizing that it takes only a matter of weeks to change the behavior or habit may help with the transition.

Recognizing those behaviors and habits allows us to control them and substitute healthier choices. Making healthier choices more convenient by preparing for your known moments of relapse and having something in place gives us a greater chance up resisting the gravity of old habits and successfully replacing them with new healthier desirable habits.

Measurement

It is reasonable to measure your success with the Mediterranean Diet in other ways than simply weight loss. Other important factors include:

- ❖ Sustainability
- ❖ Overall health and well being
- ❖ Clothes Fit
- ❖ Inches lost
- ❖ Energy Levels
- ❖ Cholesterol and triglyceride levels
- ❖ Reduced symptoms of disease

Let's take a tangible example and talk about how this works. Each of us have a limited amount of willpower, and most of us lack the awareness to focus that willpower on the right thing at the right time. This is why forcing yourself to not eat that favorite snack before going to bed is so difficult. Sidestep your lack of willpower by using progressive extremism and the following techniques.

Realize that it takes about three weeks to change a habit. First identify the habit or habits that need to be changed to come into alignment with this WOE. Track your progress understanding when there will be resistance, and it has nothing to do with the decision, it is the way we process change. (Habits)

Pause to ask yourself if you are actually hungry and what a sweet snack will do for you. Is it a physical craving or an emotional craving? Pay attention to the answer then get curious about it, ponder it. (Mindfulness)

Make sure there is a piece of your favorite healthy fruit that you must encounter to get to the sweet treat, or toss the ice cream, cookies, cake mixes, sodas, so that they are not present. (Behavioral Economics)

Now on the fifth day of your commitment you had a hard day at work or got some bad news, and you feel resentful because of depriving yourself of that nightly ice cream. This is the time you usually fix a bowl of ice cream or buttered popcorn.

You head toward the freezer, now is the moment of truth. Maybe no one will know (or care) if you just finish off that pint of Ben and Jerrys.

Pause

Recall that on day 5 you are at the place of highest resistance to a stressful change. Take a breath.

Reflect on if you even feel hungry, think about how that recipe you prepared and ate earlier was delicious and left you feeling satiated. If it is not hunger then it might be the emotional drain of the day. What effect will PB& Cookies flavor ice cream have on the outcome of the day? Take a diaphragmatic breath.

As you head to the freezer you see that hanging from the handle is a small bag of vine ripened Palisade peaches, the delicate smell just reaching your nostrils. The freezer stays closed and that peach never tasted better.

Without forcing or depriving yourself you have made the choice to continue the way of eating that will soon become a healthy habit.

Although everyone is different studies on changing habits have been conclusive that the process remains the same.

The process of breaking habits goes through identifiable steps:

You start with enthusiasm and optimism, committed to the outcome. This step can last from hours to a week.

Next it gets hard particularly when there are no immediate results. Typically once the initial novelty has worn off there is a barrier that needs to be overcome.

In the next step you have full awareness of the challenge of staying with the change, less willpower is needed and more resilience.

After 21 days or so you have adopted a new habit that requires little effort to maintain.

Getting Started

First Steps

The Mediterranean Diet integrates the basics of healthy eating with the wonderful flavors, textures, and ingredients that have been enjoyed by the people of the Mediterranean forever. Some components include:

- ❖ Consuming more fruits and vegetables
- ❖ Caring about cooking and enjoying meals
- ❖ Eating slowly and savoring your food
- ❖ Preparing and eating mindfully
- ❖ Picking ingredients that have known health benefits
- ❖ Having a higher percentage of fruits and vegetables
- ❖ Using Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ❖ Reducing carbohydrates
- ❖ Change habits
- ❖ Get a diet buddy. Ask a family member, friend or coworker to join your quest to become healthier, they will become healthier and keep you accountable.
- ❖ Eat healthier foods and portion sizes by practicing at least one mindful eating technique at every meal.

- ❖ Beat Cravings differentiate between addictions like sugar and what your body wants to stay healthy.
- ❖ Drink Water
- ❖ Practice mindful eating
- ❖ Commit to cooking
- ❖ Smaller more frequent meals portions vs. calories
- ❖ Regulate Sleep
- ❖ Savor
- ❖ Eat at the right time
- ❖ Produce: Eat plenty of tomatoes, broccoli, spinach, kale, cauliflower, carrots, onions, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, apples, bananas, pears, berries, oranges, and melons.
- ❖ Nuts and seeds: Each day, eat a handful or more of almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, or pumpkin seeds.
- ❖ Legumes: This will be a major source of fiber and protein for followers of this diet. Try to eat more beans, peas, lentils, peanuts, chickpeas, and more.
- ❖ Tubers: These starchy vegetables should be consumed in moderation, but are still an important part of this diet. Enjoy potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, and yams.
- ❖ Whole grains: Avoid refined carbohydrates, but eat small servings of things like whole oats, brown rice, rye, barley, corn, buckwheat, whole wheat, and whole grains.
- ❖ Fish and other seafood: At least twice a week, eat salmon, sardines, trout, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, clams, crab, oysters, or mussels.
- ❖ Poultry: Occasionally, enjoy chicken, duck, turkey, or other birds.
- ❖ Eggs and dairy: Cheese, yogurt, and eggs are a great source of healthy fats and protein.
- ❖ Herbs and spices: Accentuate your meals with garlic, basil, mint, rosemary, sage, nutmeg, cinnamon, and pepper.
- ❖ Healthy fats: This is an important part of the Mediterranean diet, so make sure you're getting plenty of fats from olive oil, nuts, and avocado.

Also, you should be sure to drink plenty of water, as well as a moderate amount of red wine, coffee, and tea. Note that anyone with problems with alcohol consumption should avoid consuming wine, even though it is encouraged with this diet.

While carbohydrates coming from pasta and bread are part of the Mediterranean Diet, newcomers need to pay special attention to controlling the portion of these foods. In addition to sticking with whole grains such as sourdough, vegetables should comprise most of your calories, meaning smaller portions are in order.

Mindful Eating

A term that is now commonly used instead of diet is Way of Eating or (WOE). We can add mindful eating to other techniques like drinking water instead of juice or soda (or beer), and taking steps to resist cravings. With mindful eating you listen to your body's natural cues triggering hunger. Paying attention to what you eat helps you develop skills to practice ridding yourself unhealthy eating habits and cravings. Mindful eating overcomes habits like eating too quickly, eating for emotional support, overeating and being drawn to junk food and candy.

- ❖ Choose what you consume with care and thoughtfulness
- ❖ Put your eating utensil down between each bite.
- ❖ Chew each bite food 25 times or more
- ❖ Take note of the taste, texture, and smell of your food
- ❖ Eat in a place reserved for dining.
- ❖ Eat without electronics or reading.
- ❖ Pause between each bite.
- ❖ Pause longer when you start to feel full. The Japanese have a phrase hara-hachi bu, which refers to the practice of eating only until you are 80 percent full.
- ❖ Drink water when you first feel hungry

- ❖ Try to make mealtime a social time and pleasant, avoiding hot topics like politics, current events, and others health problems
- ❖ Keep experimenting with the many Med Diet recipes so you always have portions of the meal you like.
- ❖ Savor the flavors
- ❖ Try to shop locally

Portion Control

Reducing portions to appropriate levels is some time difficult. I believe a part of the difficulty is that from an early age many of us are taught two complementary things.

The first habit formed at an early age is to finish you plate. Depending on how much food is on your plate whether at home or at a restaurant, the impulse is to complete what is set before you. Changing that belief and behavior can really help with eating the appropriate amount at meals and snacks.

The second is to not waste food. This one is equally as insidious as finishing all the food on your plate. If you establish the mindset and habit that you can simply wrap up a leftover food to be enjoyed later, and even when you can't more is not better. The long term healthy strategy is it is better to waste something than to eat it and regret it.

Eating protein encourages satiety or the feeling of being full and raises your metabolism and the amount of calories you are burning. If you're looking to shed some pounds, you might want to consider adding a few servings of legumes into your diet.

Meal Times

The paradigm for meals in the west is moderate sized breakfasts and lunched then large, or sometimes huge, meals at dinner or supper time. Although we poke fun at seniors who have their final meal of the day at 4PM, they are closer to what studies and my personal experience have shown to be a healthier eating schedule.

Some of meal timing is dependent on when you exercise. Dr. Mercola is a proponent of exercising before breakfast, and when I am able to do so I always feel better for the entire day. High intensity exercise will boost your metabolism encouraging your body to burn more calories, this may help you reach your weight goals. Even if exercise is not an option first thing in the morning, try making breakfast one of two primary meals in your day. Eating early in the day give your body the opportunity to burn those calories, eating late in the day, especially a large meal will make you gain weight. So what I try to do is make breakfast and lunch my primary meal and have little or no dinner and never eat past 6PM. As with any habit as discussed above, adopting this change may be difficult it is opposite societal norms. With the epidemic of obesity in this country, it is easy to spot where these societal norms have gotten us.

Eating Out

The Mediterranean Diet is really best done at home or when visiting like-minded friends or family. Learning to prepare the meals and having the proper equipment to do so is essential to the long term adoption of this WOE. That being said most everyone will be dining out at least occasionally, and there are ways to maintain the diet while doing so. Depending on where you are planning to eat, you should plan ahead and eat a light Med Diet meal before going to reduce your appetite. In terms of portion control it would probably make sense to divide your meal in half prior to eating, then take the other half home to use for another meal. Stuffing yourself with a full serving at night is counter to the notion of the

Mediterranean Diet. The longer you have been practicing this diet, the less likely you are to do so.



Traveling

Traveling can be challenging in many ways, adding trying to maintain any specific WOE can make it even more challenging. Here are some tips to maintaining the Mediterranean Diet while on the road. As with eating out it helps to be organized and plan ahead. Preparing and packing cut vegetables is a fairly simple and easy way to start. Seeking out restaurants that serve more fruit and vegetable friendly meals will give you better choices, as will asking locals where you might go to find healthier fare. There are also more and more chain restaurants that cater to those of us making healthier choices, using the internet to plan and eat at those places is a good strategy. However my first recommendation would be to save money and eat healthier by eating out of groceries store and markets. Doing so takes some additional discipline but the reward is saving money which will extend your travel dollars and maintaining the WOE while probably trying local favorites. For example my wife and were traveling for

several months in Mexico and it was a bit challenging but always rewarding to gather our meals by visiting the various shops. There are separate shops for tortillas, dairy, seafood, roadside stands for vegetables, and fisherman's beach for seafood. Relying on them and sleeping in the back of our pickup truck extended our visit for at least five weeks, kept us healthy, and put us more in touch with a wonderful culture. Even if you are staying in hotels with a little planning and effort it is possible to prepare meals and snacks that are nutritious, healthy, and inexpensive.

Most people transitioning to the Mediterranean Diet have already enjoyed dishes that are compliant, although with portions and the percentage of carbohydrates were likely somewhat larger than ideal. The challenges to adopting this WOE include: eating in rather than out more often; learning to plan and shop more effectively; learning to prepare the delicious dishes; accommodating reluctant family members; learning to say no to sweets and sugary drinks; and unavailable ingredients.

The best way to start is with one meal per day, then other meals as you can until you are eating fully Mediterranean. Concentrate at first on recipes you know you will like, there are a wide variety of foods on this diet, making it easy to decide on staple favorites.

Recipes for most of the Mediterranean diet dishes are fairly straightforward and easy to make, even inexperienced chefs will improve with practice and soon be making delicious meals, and maybe even enjoying the preparation almost as much as eating the finished product!

Weight Loss



Generally speaking weight loss comes naturally sometime after the adoption of the Mediterranean Diet. Folks transitioning from other diets like keto and paleo will find this Way of Eating far less restrictive, with the primary benefit is that it is easy to stick with. For those who want to rapidly and permanently lose weight there is an option called intermittent fasting that is very effective. This method is focused on the times that you consume calories, and works extremely well with the nutrition provided by the Mediterranean Diet.

If you want to integrate fasting into to your WOE it is imperative that you consult your physician first, particularly if you are undergoing treatment for a medical condition. I am not a physician, but am a practitioner.

My experience with fasting goes back many years. As a young adult I fasted occasionally for cleansing purposes, with the longest one going 10 days. I took psyllium husks and herbs and drank clean water. I gained clarity, lost weight, and was able to help an in law move their household on the 10th day; lifting and carrying heavy furniture. No pizza!

I fasted periodically for many years this way, with the same results each time. More recently I tried a longer fast, going eighteen days without food or anything other than water. Again I lost weight, after a few days ended up with increased clarity of thought, and could have continued to 21 or more days if I chose to.

However I made a grave error while fasting. I drank a lot of water as that is a requirement of a true fast. However I did not consider salt. My understanding is that without consuming sufficient salt while fasting, water does not have molecules to bind to and be absorbed. So despite the fact that I was drinking a lot of water I became dehydrated and did not realize why. Shortly afterward I did the research and discovered this fact.

Since that experiment three years ago, I did some more research and found two options that seemed reasonable and could be combined with the Mediterranean Diet. The first is called 5:2, and the practice asks that you water only (+ a little salt!) two days per week, and eat as you normally would the remaining five days. Many people practice this fast for overall health and weight loss or sustainment. I use it at times when it works best with my schedule.

The second option is called Alternate Day fasting which is an every other day fast, another way to intermittent fast. With this plan you eat as you normally would every other day, on alternate days drink lots of water. I personally find this the most difficult to manage, and like the 5:2 intermittent fast it is especially difficult to maintain if family members are not joining you.

The third option is my preferred intermittent fasting method. With this method you stretch your daily fasting time by delaying or missing breakfast, or eating early in the day then fasting from lunch time to the next day's breakfast. Fasting for 16 to 18 hours per day is pretty easy to do if you have breakfast at 6AM and lunch no later than noon. Once you become used to this fast it is easy to maintain. Of course it can be problematic for family members not joining you and expecting a large evening meal, but the health benefits are well worth it. Combining the nutrition of the Mediterranean Diet with any of the intermittent fasting

methods really is a great choice for optimizing weight loss and becoming healthier.

Would I have been easily able to adopt both fasting practices without the earlier experiences of fasting? I think so. Using the techniques described in the section on habit formation and craving it is relatively easy to dismiss cravings until they are eliminated altogether, does not take that long, and is well worth the effort.

If your primary goal is weight loss, one of the above fasts can be added to the Mediterranean Diet to accelerate your results. If you feel that you just can't do it, discontinue fasting and focus on preparing and mindfully eating smaller portions.

Adopting the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid is a safe, healthy and effective way to lose weight. If done properly one can start dropping weight while reducing stress, increasing energy, creating a healthier body, and enjoying nutritious and delicious foods.

With this WOE one can fill up (or feel filled up) quickly without adding many calories. Integrating this diet into your lifestyle and combining it with some exercise causes the body to start using up or metabolizing stored fat, especially in the abdominal area.

Of course results depend on how overweight you are, many newcomers experience weight loss of two to five pounds per week initially. Weight loss often takes effort, however shifting your meals and even snacks toward the Mediterranean guidelines and adopting the other associated habits will make this “diet” seem fun, easy, stress free, and satisfying. Dieters who have struggled with counting calories, feeling deprived, going hungry, social isolation, choking down pre prepared meals, and more will feel a sense of relief as they establish the habit of just eating well with the Mediterranean Diet.

Instead of the side effects of irritability, hunger pangs, numerous diseases including Type 2 diabetes, and yo-yo weight loss; potential side effects include a restoration to health, satisfying meals, and an urge to share your

new lifestyle. There are enough ingredients to consistently eat foods that you like, and what a thrill discovering the new smells, textures, and tastes awaiting you as you experiment.

Intermittent Fasting

- 1. 5:2 - Eat the Mediterranean Diet for five days, water only for two days each week.***
- 2. Alternate Day – Eat the Mediterranean Diet every other day, drink lots of water on off days.***
- 3. Time Restriction – Eat the Mediterranean Diet within a 6 or 8 hour period, fast the remainder of the day.***

One thing not everyone realizes is that eating on the Mediterranean Diet is not restricted to Mediterranean ingredients. The studies that identified the Mediterranean's as the most consistently healthy population determined that it is not the specific produce of the region, but rather the high percentage of fruits and vegetables, reduction of meats, butter, and other animal fat, and substitution of olive oil that promotes robust health and weight loss.

What does this mean? Although it is best to eat locally so that you are more likely to consume vine ripened fruits and vegetables, there is a world of delicious and nutritious fruits and vegetables that meet the standard of the Mediterranean Diet. Those that are interested in exploring many different flavors should be delighted with all of the choices of ingredients. The Japanese in particular have a diet that lends itself to eating healthy, if you can ditch the tempura.

It is important to realize that weight loss is often a byproduct of adopting a healthier lifestyle. Attitude and understanding the principles are more important than counting calories. Some people go all out and all in create fabulous meals constantly, while others start by substituting approved foods for fast food or staple meat heavy diets. Either way you will feel the difference to the degree that you embrace the WOE (Way of Eating). Enjoy the journey, it is sustainable and you will never look back.

Eating less food more frequently is another proven way to encourage weight loss. Steering away from large meals, particularly in the evening, will start to shrink the stomach and reduce the tendency to feel hunger and overeat. A side effect is that your digestive system actually burns more calories digesting the food; even eating the same number of calories reduces net calories helping weight loss. Although some recommend eating every two hours on this diet, that seems extreme and the Mediterranean Diet is not about being extreme, challenging, or difficult.

Another good weight loss trick is to think less about calories and more about portion control, slowing down and enjoying smaller meals. It takes approximately twenty minutes for your stomach to signal that it's full.

Stress leads to overeating and chemical retention of fat in your abdomen. Another way to encourage weight loss and better health is to systematically reduce stress. Easier said than done! Stress reduction is a good subject for another book, but what works well for me is daily meditation or prayer, knowing how to breathe properly and doing so, and recognizing and countering obvious stress triggers when they occur. Everyone likely has their own way of reducing stress, just be aware that stress reduction is a valuable tool for ensuring, better sense of wellbeing, better health, and weight loss.

Keep the material from this book, recipes, the Mediterranean Food pyramid, and common ingredient list present in your kitchen. This is not to create guilt when you are not abiding by the guidelines; it is to keep you mindful of the great meals to come and to make sure to keep the ingredients on hand. Plan your shopping and your meals and snacks to minimize trips to the store or garden.

Try at least three new recipes per week. It is tempting to stick to what you know, but it is important to strive for the consumption of a wider variety of nutritious ingredients, particularly vegetables. The rule of thumb for children trying new foods is that you must try it numerous times, as many as ten before you can decide you do not like it or cannot tolerate it. Think about the adventure of traveling to Italy, Greece or Crete, and how thrilling it would be to eat like the natives.

Sometimes hunger pangs are the body thirsting for water. In addition to overall health the body uses rid itself of stored fat and toxins. You might try slaking your thirst before reaching for a snack as a way to reduce snacking, particularly unhealthy snacking. The increased fiber from the Mediterranean Diet will also need a lot of water to aid in digestion. See if you can drink between three and four liters of water each day.

Nutritionists will also tell you that water should be drunk at room temperature rather than with ice or chilled in the refrigerator. That is something you might have trouble getting used to, but once you make the switch it becomes natural. You can always add squeeze of lemon or lime or a slice of cucumber to give it a little taste.

Starting out with Med Diet fruit vegetables and snacks available will help with cravings. Differentiate between addictive cravings like sugar and nutrient poor cravings like Vitamin C.

It is important to realize that weight loss is often a byproduct of adopting a healthier lifestyle. Attitude and understanding the principles are more important than counting calories. Some people go all out and all in create fabulous meals constantly, while others start by substituting approved foods for fast food or staple meat heavy diets. Either way you will feel the difference to the degree that you embrace the WOE (Way of Eating). Enjoy the journey, it is sustainable and you will never look back.

Mediterranean Diet Guidelines

The Mediterranean Diet integrates basic healthy eating with the wonderful flavors, textures, and ingredients that have been enjoyed by the people of the Mediterranean for eons.

- ✦ Change Habits, Commit To The Change
- ✦ Consume Three Servings Of Fruits And Vegetables Each Day
- ✦ Pick Ingredients That Have Known Health Benefits
- ✦ Prepare And Eat Meals Slowly
- ✦ Savor Your Food
- ✦ Use Up To 1/4 Cup Of Extra Virgin Olive Oil Daily
- ✦ Drink 1/2 Your Body Weight In Ounces Of Water Daily
- ✦ Eliminate Sweet Drinks, Don't Drink Calories
- ✦ Control Portions To Lose Or Maintain Weight
- ✦ Have At Least Two Legume Meals Per Week
- ✦ Have At Least Two Servings Of Fish Per Week
- ✦ Have Dried Fruit, Nuts or Cheese For Snacks Or Dessert
- ✦ Eat Dairy Sparingly, Yogurt Daily
- ✦ Reduce Or Eliminate Meat To No More Than Once Or Twice A Week
- ✦ Reduce Carbohydrates & Eat Only Wholegrain
- ✦ Have Wine In Moderation
- ✦ Sweets Are For Special Occasions Only
- ✦ Regulate Sleep
- ✦ Eat Early In The Day
- ✦ Get A Diet Buddy
- ✦ Share your Story

Lose Weight, Feel Great

Mediterranean Diet



By Rick Helvey

All rights reserved 2018 Direct Focus, LLC

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



Get Started Groceries

Mediterranean Diet - Get Started Groceries

Organic is always best. If too expensive or unavailable use the least processed option available

Fruits: Oranges, Apples, Bananas, Grapes, Apricots, Avocados, Cherries, Figs, Plums, Pomegranates, Peaches, Melons, Lemons, Grapes

Berries: Strawberries, Blueberries, Raspberries, Goji, Bilberries, Acai, Cranberries, Blackberries

Common Vegetables: Broccoli, Spinach, Carrots, Kale, Onions, Artichokes, Bell Peppers, Eggplant, Beets, Cabbage, Green Beans, Leaf Greens, Leeks, Mushrooms, Olives, Squash, Tomatoes, Garlic, Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes

Frozen veggies: Mixes with vegetables identified above

Nuts and Seeds: Almonds, Walnuts, Sunflower Seeds, Pumpkin Seeds, Pine Nuts, Peanuts, Cashews, Flax Seeds, Hemp Seeds

Beans and Legumes: Lentils, Hummus, Garbanzo (Chick Peas), Black Beans, Kidney Beans, Peas, Soybean, Pinto Beans, Navy Beans

Grains: Quinoa, Polenta, Rice, Whole Grain Pasta, Oatmeal, Couscous, Bulgur, Sourdough Whole Grain Bread

Seafood: Shrimp (only wild), Cod, Crab, Pole Caught Albacore (Tuna), Scallops, Wild Caught Salmon, Wild Caught Sardines, Farmed Mussels, Arctic Char, U.S Farmed Barramundi, Wild Atlantic Long fin Squid, Atlantic Mackerel

Oils and Fats: Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Avocado Oil, Canola Oil, Grape Seed Oil, Sesame Oil

Herbs and Spices: Sea Salt, Himalayan Salt, Black Pepper, Turmeric, Cinnamon, Basil, Cilantro (Coriander), Cumin, Mint, Sage, Thyme, Tarragon, Oregano

Dairy: Cheese, Greek Yogurt, Low-fat Milk, Eggs

© All Rights Reserved 2018 Direct Focus,LLC

Food Groups

Grains

Stick to whole grain foods as they have fiber whereas processed flours do not. This includes pasta, breads, cereals, and brown rice rather than white. It is best to choose the minimally-processed versions of the grains listed below. Refining and processing reduces the amount of many valuable nutrients, including minerals, vitamins, and fiber.

Bulgur	Farro
Rye	Wheat
Barley	Buckwheat
Millet	Oats
Corn	Wheatberries
Couscous	Quinoa

Vegetables

This is not a comprehensive list but here are most of the vegetables recommended on the Mediterranean Diet. By choosing vegetables with different colors you will not only have pleasing meal presentations but it also helps ensure you are getting a variety of nutritious ingredients. The vegetables highlighted in bold are considered superfoods because they are so nutrient rich.

Avocado	Spinach
Pepper – All Colors	Carrot
Eggplant	Sweet Potatoes

Yams	Tomatoes
Beets	Broccoli
Kale	Romaine Lettuce
Bok Choy	Collards
Mustard	Broccoli Rabe
Turnip	Squash
Asparagus	Zucchini
Artichoke	Green Beans
Cauliflower	Brussels Sprouts
Celery	Garbanzo (Chickpeas)
Couscous	Tiger Nuts
Red Cabbage	Red Onion
Radish	

Restrict or eliminate starch heavy vegetables corn and potatoes and any processed vegetable such as potato chips. Also onions are healthy and accepted, but onion rings are not.



Fruits

Although consuming any fruit is preferable to processed foods and a meat heavy diet, there are several fruits that are considered superfoods and should be first choice.

Avocados
Goji Berries
Mangosteens

Blueberries
Acai Berries
Coconuts



Other popular fruit you can enjoy with the Mediterranean Diet include:

Oranges	Plums
Apples	Pomegranates
Bananas	Peaches
Grapes	Melons
Apricots	Lemons
Cranberries	Baobab
Cherries	Strawberries
Figs	Blackberries
Raspberries	Goji
Bilberries	Acai
Cranberries	Blackberries

Red Grapes

Blueberries

Peaches

Watermelon

Nuts

Nuts are generally healthy and are included in many Mediterranean Diet recipes. Some care should be taken when choosing which nuts or forms of nuts to use when preparing meals or snacks. Raw unsalted and unflavored nuts are always going to be the best choice, if you prefer roasted steer clear of salted, honey roasted or other added flavorings.

Though commonly called nuts, Brazil nuts are actually seeds from the Brazil nut tree, one of the largest trees growing upward of 200 feet found in the Amazon. These seeds are high in selenium and anti-inflammatory. A recent study found that only one Brazil nut each day improves anti-inflammatory and antioxidant responses in the body while improving cholesterol levels. The elagic acid and selenium also combine to reduce cancer risk, while the seed's nutrients are heart healthy and even benefit the thyroid gland.

Sunbutter – Consider substituting peanut butter for sunflower butter. This nutritious snack is high in protein, high in Vitamin E, high in magnesium, is highly unprocessed and mainly unsaturated fats.

Other nuts (seeds) to consider include are:

Almond

Hazelnut

Pine Nuts

Pistachio

Walnuts

Sesame Seed

Cashews

Pecans

Chestnuts

Peanuts



Legumes

Legumes are the fruit or seed of any of the plants of the legume family. These happen to be one of my personal favorites for protein, flavor and value. There are over 19,000 different species of legume plants, giving us a wide variety of legumes to choose from. All over the world millions of people rely on legumes for convenience, affordability, and nutritional density. Legumes are high in protein, which is needed for muscle growth and cellular function. Vegans and vegetarians often rely on legumes to meet their protein needs when meat is absent from their diets. Legumes are also high in the dietary fiber which promotes regularity. Legumes promote heart health by normalizing cholesterol levels, decreasing triglycerides, lowering both blood pressure and inflammation.

In addition legumes have high levels of vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients like iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, folate, and

manganese. Legumes also work to regulate blood sugar, with fiber slowing the absorption of sugar in the bloodstream and maintaining blood sugar levels.

Some of the more common legumes that are staples of the Mediterranean Diet are as follows:

Chickpeas	Lentils
Soybeans	Peanuts
Kidney beans	Navy beans
Peas	Green beans
Alfalfa	Peas

Legumes also contain antinutrients that interfere with the absorption of important micronutrients. The biggest one is phytic acid which is also found in other foods like cereals, and nuts. Phytic acid can prevent the absorption of certain essential minerals. Another one is lectins which resists digestion. Luckily proper preparation can diminish the negative effects of these ingredients.

Sprouting is done by soaking the legume for 8 to 24 hours, straining them, then letting them sprout. If you have the time to do this, sprouting not greatly reduces the acid and its effects; it actually increases the protein digestibility and Vitamin C.

Fermentation also improves the nutritional quality of legumes. By combining seeds with yeast and an acid, healthy bacteria are created that reduces phytic acid and increases protein digestibility.



You will want to use dry beans and lentils when you have time to soak them. If you need to use canned beans make sure they get a good rinse to remove excess sodium. Also be sure to cook beans, especially kidney beans as they can be poisonous if uncooked. If you are diabetic know that legumes have substantial carbs which can spike your blood sugar.

Dairy

As noted above raw milk is considered a superfood, and goat and sheep milk are consumed quite a bit in the Mediterranean as well as other regions of the world. This is of course a personal choice; I stay away from dairy as I have become lactose intolerant. If it works for you moderate consumption of milk, cheese, and yoghurt are in keeping with the diet. A combination that can be light and flavorful is cheese and fruit in as many

wonderful pairings as you can imagine. As a side dish, enhancement for a meal or as a dessert the combinations of these two are always satisfying.

Why Greek Yogurt?

Greek yogurts have fad status and are promoted as healthy and having higher protein than standard yogurt. Nearly all “Greek” yogurts have unnaturally low-fat and have added sugar balance for the lack of taste. Removing natural fat from dairy means that other additives are used in order to give yogurt an attractive texture and taste. These are additive you do not want to ingest.

In addition traditional Greek yogurt has a tart taste, which again is offset with sugar to appease consumers.

So instead you might try fermented or probiotic yogurt. The difference between nearly all Greek yogurts and probiotic is the quality of the milk and process used to make the yogurt. Unprocessed, fermented yogurts contain live cultures which are responsible for its characteristic sour or tangy taste. These live cultures are very beneficial for your digestive system and overall health.

Fish and other Seafood

Seafood is trickier for those of us who live inland. Unlike Pepe, most of us can't just swing by Pikes Market and pick up the catch of the day. Especially for those of us who enjoy seafood, it would be nice to think that it could be our protein ingredient for many meals. Unfortunately that is unwise due to the mercury build up in many fish species. It is best to keep seafood as a twice a week treat and select from the many other protein options for the rest of the week. The benefits of seafood are well documented, especially the only meat superfood salmon. The best ones to eat are rich in Omega-3s and don't have the saturated fats of animal meats.

Mackerel	Lake Trout
Herring	Sardines
Albacore Tuna	Salmon
Mussels	Cod
Shrimp (Fresh Caught Only)	Crab
Lobster	Haddock
Scallops	Oysters
Clams	

Oils

Oil and in particular Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) is a primary ingredient in the Mediterranean Diet. Extra virgin olive oil has three qualities that make it the perfect cooking oil. It contains mostly stable monounsaturated

fatty acids; it has low levels of free fatty acids and high level of protective antioxidants.

Olive oil is very high in monounsaturated fats and has a modest amount of vitamins E and K. The oil is loaded with antioxidants, such as Vitamins E and K and contains plenty of beneficial fatty acids.

Extra virgin olive oil's primary health benefit is the antioxidants that are biologically active and can help fight serious diseases. EVOO fights these diseases by reducing chronic inflammation that is among the leading drivers of diseases including heart disease, cancer, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, Alzheimer's and arthritis.

Although it is accepted and proven wisdom that using EVOO should be the first choice for cooking, there are concerns over it breaking down when heated. Heating the oil above the smoke point increases the chance of oxidative damage and the creation of potentially harmful compounds.

Numerous studies have confirmed the stability of extra virgin olive oil during cooking. These studies have really tested the point at which various oils will break down. The experiments heat the oils for long periods of time and take them up to extremely high temperatures. These are conditions that should never happen in home cooking, and the EVOO stood the test without failing.

This oil goes rancid more slowly than some other oils (presumably due to the high antioxidant content), but it does degrade over time. The oil itself will go rancid and the polyphenols and other compounds will also break down. (Extra-virgin olive oil will turn to virgin olive oil in a glass bottle exposed to light at room temperature.) The main ways to avoid this are to protect the oil from light and heat. Some tips:

Buy or store EVOO in a dark glass bottle. Try to buy from a place that has enough turnover to ensure your oil is fairly fresh. Store inside a cupboard, cool and dark are the key to preserving freshness. Since olive oil will last for up to a year in the cupboard, there is no need for refrigeration if you are using the recommended amount of 1/4 cup of oil per day.



Meats

With the Mediterranean Diet the commonly consumed meats such as pork, poultry, lamb, and beef should be reduced or eliminated to reduce the negative effects of animal fat. For many this is the greatest challenge, particularly if one lives with committed meat eaters. While some may prefer the cold turkey approach, many others have found that gradually reducing these animal products eases the transition so that it is less disruptive. If you are continuing to eat meat try to reduce meat consumption to one or two meals per week, or much smaller portion over a few more meals per week.

If you are a meat eater, the best way to accomplish reducing your animal fats is to set a goal, plan your meals, and start substituting Mediterranean Diet meals with those you are accustomed to. Starting to feel better, losing

weight, enjoying positive feedback for your choices from friends and family, and enjoying wonderful new tastes will take the place of the short term satisfaction of eating a burger or steak.

Some folks are accustomed to game hunting and game meat. These meats will be healthier than ranch or farm raised meats and by definition organic. If meat is still on the menu make sure you pick the leanest cuts possible, watch out for ground meats, and select only organic and grass fed if possible.

Anemia

Anemia presents when there are insufficient red blood cells, with the most common form being iron deficiency. Bone marrow uses iron to make hemoglobin which in turn make up red blood cells. Some dieters moving away from a traditional meat and potatoes diet toward a Mediterranean Diet that includes some meat but if plant based may suffer from anemia, the important thing is to recognize it early and treat it properly. Some options to increase iron, folates, Vitamin B-12, and Vitamin C include eating more dark green leafy vegetables, kidney beans, soy products, cruciferous vegetables and tomatoes.

Superfoods

Blueberries

Goji Berries

Acai Berries

Coconuts

Avocados

Broccoli Rabe

Kale

Sweet Potatoes

Salmon

Raw Milk

Cinnamon

Almonds

Spirulina

Wheatgrass

Flaxseeds

Exercise

Generally speaking exercise in Europe and the rest of the Mediterranean region is simpler and easier than the machinations many Americans go through, with gyms, P90X regimens, and Body Flow and the rest. If you enjoy those activities then continue on with your practice. However if you don't have a current activity that you do enjoy, you might start with walking and yoga. I say walking AND yoga because depending on your climate, walking may be difficult to do year round. Although walking is the primary exercise for many Mediterraneans, it is also best to add yoga which can be done year round from the comfort of your own home. Yoga also engages your entire musculature for maximum benefit in the minimum amount of time. When built into your daily routines and activities exercise will work best, and move you more rapidly toward you goals.



Yoga is also progressive in that you can start with very mild easy to do poses and progress into full body workouts that stretch, lengthen, and build muscle, provide a cardiovascular workout, as well as improved respiration, energy and vitality.

The point is to enjoy your exercise so that your body becomes accustomed to it and it becomes a habit. Other ways to exercise that are enjoyable and sustainable are hiking, biking, skiing, basketball, volleyball, dance, martial arts like Aikido, pickle ball, and skating. Just pick or learn your favorite and go!

Useful Tips

Although some aspects of the Mediterranean Diet can be expensive, generally folks save money when transitioning to this WOE. By reducing the amount of meat consumed, as well as the frequency of dining out because there is such great tasting food at home, weekly grocery bills typically are reduced. Even at roughly the same cost, improving the quality of the food and thoughtfully cooking to reduce waste translates to a healthier you.

Many of the frequently used foods, especially dry ingredients, that are illustrated in the get started grocery guide can typically be purchased in bulk or mail ordered beforehand to reduce cost.

Clear out temptations that make it easy to fall off the wagon. Make sure healthy foods are available until the habit of the WOE is in place. Removing the temptations of processed and unhealthy foods or drinks will help during the several weeks it takes to change those habits. Depending on your current habits and WOE, it is likely that you will start feeling better and if you are paying attention your body will provide feedback encouraging you to keep going.

While moderate amounts of red wine are OK with this WOE, understand that overindulgence with wine, or habitually drinking other liquors will be counterproductive. Your rules for life should take precedence here.

If you have lunch away from home an insulated lunch bag and small plastic containers will help pack for your day's destination. This is ideal because it is a good way to ensure you are eating properly.

Soups are a good choice for lunches, for example vegetable, miso, onion, or minestrone are all Mediterranean Diet compliant. Hummus and pita, salads or cut vegetables such as carrots or celery are also a great option. You can also preplan by making an additional serving or more of foods that keep well to bring the next day. Habitually preparing extra servings will give you many more options at mealtime.

Fortunately the Mediterranean Diet accommodates preparing meals that the entire family can enjoy. If some are committed meat eater they can be accommodated by adding their dish to the meal, satisfying all parties. Gradually winnowing portions and slowing eating will be better for everyone, even if the goal is healthy food and not weight loss. Experimenting with recipes that work for everyone can be fun or challenging; having acceptable staples on hand is the key.

The way of cooking like the way of eating is also important in a successful switch to the Mediterranean Diet. Ways of cooking that are encouraged include poaching, broiling, roasting, sautéing, grilling, steaming & and in some cases baking.

Deep frying is off the table as it adds calories and trans fats that increase the chances of heart disease, diabetes, and is a great way to put on weight. Try not to boil or simmer poultry and vegetables as you will lose most nutrients and flavor.

Sautéing is best for foods that need shorter cooking time. These include diverse ingredients like leafy vegetables, mushrooms, and shellfish. By sautéing quickly at high heat flavor, nutrients and color are locked in.

An easy way to poach eggs is to bring a pan of water to a simmer, adding 4 or 5 drops of vinegar. Then start the water swirling in one direction within the pan. Then simply crack the egg and drop them into the pan, the whites will gather around the yolk and after 3 minutes can be spooned onto a paper towel with a slotted spoon. This process eliminated the need to crack the shell after the egg is poached.

Although it is best to use meal times to savor good food and company that is not always possible. What you want to do is strategize to ensure you maximize the healthy eating in the minimum amount of time. One thing you can do is prepare food ahead of time. A great way to start your morning out is with a smoothie that can combine fruits, vegetables, and other ingredients that are healthy and delicious.

Planning and preparation are the keys to controlling what you eat, whether traveling or if you are too busy to cook as much as you would like. By thinking ahead and fixing snacks or meals as much as possible in advance you can stay with the diet, and will feel better, have more energy, lose weight in the process. Suggestions for meals and snacks on the run are apples, cut vegetables, nuts, or dried fruits. You could spend some time each weekend on preparing these, throw them in the refrigerator and bring them each day to have delicious and nutritious snacks each day.

If you have limited time to cook and enjoy your meals, prepare by having the base ingredients and utensils on hand, and a good plan to buy and prepare great meals that do not take too long to prepare. Also on the table is preparing meals in advance then freezing them.

Roasting Vegetables

Roasting vegetables is an important part of enjoying the meals prepared Mediterranean style. Although roasting vegetables minimally reduces the nutrition of vegetables, it makes up for it with taste, an important

ingredient that should encourage us to eat more vegetables. Roasted vegetables should be a staple part of your new WOE.

The best way to roast is to start by cutting up the vegetables into one bite pieces, as uniform in size as possible. Coat the veggies evenly with EVOO; you might use your hands to do this, rubbing the excess oil into the back of your hands for skin conditioner. Seasoning is next, with less salt and more pepper along with other herbs that you might enjoy. Commonly used Mediterranean Diet herbs include: garlic, thyme, pul biber, sage, anise, rosemary, basil, cloves, chiles, cumin, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, fennel, parsley, pepper, savory, bay leaf, sumac, tarragon, and za'atar. You will want to explore some of these lesser known herbs through the recipes found here and in your other sources. Keep in mind that you want the herbs distributed on the roasting veggies as well as the oil.

Preheat oven to 400°F

Roasters can use a baking stone, roasting pan or foil lined pan. Make sure your veggies are separated so each get the full heat of the oven. Bake for 25 minutes or more, checking every ten minutes to see if they are *al dente* yet and if a little more EVOO might be in order to keep them from drying out.

A good rule of thumb is to make double or more of the recipe because roasted veggies can be used with many other meals including breakfast with eggs, lunch mixed with beans, or as a side for upcoming dinners.

Having a variety of vegetables is great for taste and nutrition but they will likely finish roasting a different times. Be aware of this during the roasting process.

1-2 or more tsp. EVOO

Salt and Pepper

Seasonings you enjoy

Roast 20 minutes or till *al dente*.

4 or more cups chopped vegetables, here are some suggestions:

Broccoli florets	Cremini mushrooms
Butternut squash	Zucchini
Yellow squash	Red bell pepper
Red onion	Potato
Carrots	Brussels sprouts
Cauliflower	Broccolini
Leeks	Turnips
Mushrooms	Beet
Carrots	Parsnips
Cabbage	Fingerling potatoes
Green beans	

Commonly Used Mediterranean Diet Herbs

Garlic, Sumac, Tarragon, Mint, Oregano, Fennel, Thyme, Sage, Anise, Rosemary, Basil, Cloves, Cinnamon, Cumin, Lavender, Marjoram, Parsley, Crushed Pepper, Cayenne, Bay Leaf, Pul Biber, And Za'atar

Plans for Those with Non-Dieting Family Members

One of the more difficult challenges for people transitioning to the Mediterranean Diet is lack of support from family members. Having family members that will not change their eating habits is certainly a challenge many of us have faced, often the resistance disappears in the face of improved health, more energy, and the other demonstrated benefits of starting and staying on the diet.

Until that happens some may need to prepare separate meals or leave others to their own devices or something in between where most of the meal is full Mediterranean and some restricted course is prepared for those not yet on board. Another way to handle this is to change the timing of the primary meal of the day to lunch as farmers and many people in the Mediterranean do. Consuming most of your calories and lunch and having a light meal in the evening is also a good way to start losing weight. The light meal in the evening can then be supplemented with whatever other meal choices are required.

The Best Bread Recipe

This slow ferment bread recipe makes nutritious and delicious bread, muffins, tortillas and more.

Longer is better for fermenting the dough properly, by starting in the late afternoon you can allow 12 to 16 hours for fermentation. The time needed to get the desired fermentation varies based on temperature, humidity, local bacteria, and differences in flour.

Sourdough Bread Starter

To begin:

2 cups whole wheat or rye flour

1 cup room temperature water

Large glass container

In a glass container mix ingredients together thoroughly and cover loosely. Leave in a warm place, greater than 68 degrees.

After a day discard 1/2 of the starter and replace with flour and tepid water in the 2:1 ratio above.

Continue "feeding" the starter for 4 to eight days, until it is bubbly and sour smelling.

Remaining starter should be "restarted" for a few hours, then stored in the refrigerator.

Feed refrigerated starter once per week.

Sourdough Bread

6 – 8 cups whole wheat flour

2 cups tepid water

1/2 teaspoon corn starch

1/2 cup water

In a large bowl, combine the water, sourdough starter and 4 cups of flour.

Mix well and cover with plastic wrap in a warm place 8-12 hours (I do it over night).

The next day stir in the salt and sugar and add flour 1/2 to 1 cup at a time to make a very stiff dough.

Knead till smooth.

Cover and let rise 2 to 2-1/2 hours.

Punch down and divide in half.

Knead till smooth and form into rounds. Place on a greased baking sheet. Cover lightly and let rise till double and puffy (1 to 1-2 hrs).

Heat oven to 400°F.

Carefully place a small pan of hot water on the bottom rack of the oven.

Cut two slashes across each other on top of each loaf.

Bake for 10 minutes.

Pull out the rack and baste each loaf well with the cornstarch mixture.

Close the oven and allow to bake another 20-25 minutes. Loaves should be a light golden color and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.

Yields 2 loaves

Breakfast

It's no secret that breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day. This is because it starts up your metabolism for the day so that you are more effectively burning calories. Your blood sugar is low due to fasting and sleeping, making eating to add glucose to your system important. Balancing glucose improves concentration and memory, normalizes cholesterol, and reduces incidences of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. If this sounds familiar those are the same benefits of adopting the Mediterranean Diet in general.

Try to include protein, fiber and carbs with each meal. You can also be creative and make extra with each meal, remember portion control? Prepare the equivalent of two or three meals or parts of meals, and then use the leftovers for subsequent meals. A great example of this came from my Facebook Group simply titled Mediterranean Diet. Steel cut oats can be made a week in advance then heated up with toppings added each morning to provide a quick, nutritious meal. I like starting my day with fruit so smoothies or a fruit bowl work well for me. Other Med Diet breakfast favorites are Greek yogurt and fruit, whole grain cereals and bread plus fruit, and eggs with avocado or my favorite pico de gallo.

Breakfast also is a good opportunity to start consuming the vitamins and nutrients your body needs to thrive. Importantly the satisfaction or satiation you feel from eating a nutritious breakfast reduces the chances of snacking on sugary foods or drinks later in the day.

Children who skip breakfast or survive on sugary cereals have more difficulty focusing, and end up being fatigued in school or other activities. This can affect their mood and disposition, as well as grades in school. They will also crave junk food during the day and likely end up overweight. The trend toward obesity in children has extended now from the United States to the Mediterranean, where sugary drinks, larger portions, and less fruits and vegetables are having the same devastating effects that they had in the west.

Note on juicing. Yes you get some benefits of fruits and vegetables when juicing, however there is several good reasons why juicing is not considered Mediterranean Diet.

Detox - It is healthy to focus on healthy ingredients and whole foods while eliminating processed foods and alcohol from your diet to reduce toxins in the body. If you eat this way a majority of the time, your body will naturally detox each day. The best way to encourage your body to detoxify is by getting exercise preferably in the sun, portion control, water and of course, the many foods of the Mediterranean Diet. Juice cleanses are just not necessary if you are on this diet.

Sugar Spike - Even when juices are made at home, they have a considerable amount of sugar, essentially the concentration of all the sugars in the particular fruits or vegetables that are being juiced. Many folks reading this are either diabetic or pre-diabetic, and the way of eating discourages excess sugar consumption. Removing the fructose found in most fruit from the bloodstream can overload the liver and cause the liver to convert the sugar to liver fat.

Fiber – fiber is one of the primary beneficial factors of the Med Diet, particularly the insoluble fiber that rids the digestive tract of plaque and trapped toxins, and slows down the absorption of sugars helping to avoid spikes. Eating adequate fiber regulates the digestive system encouraging elimination, promoting weight loss, and cutting the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Weight Loss – The lack of fiber in juice also will increase the feeling of hunger as you won't have the full feeling that tells the body it's OK to stop eating. Drinking juice instead of eating food excludes protein as well, one of the foundations of the Mediterranean Diet.

Gut Bacteria – Healthy digestive bacteria thrives on fiber, eliminating or reducing fiber will also reduce the concentration of these key bacteria.

These are some reasons that you may want to reconsider juice fasts or juicing as an alternative the healthy delicious Mediterranean Diet.

Some suggestion for breakfast

Breakfast foods lend themselves to be being combined and mix and matched. Common Mediterranean Diet meals may not need to be cooked or require much preparation when cooking. Probably the healthiest breakfast you can have is a smoothie. Smoothies ingredients can be combined in any number of ways, the basic ingredients are always fruit, vegetables, then sometimes nuts or yogurt blended with a high powered blender. Some nutritious and popular smoothie recipes are listed below:

Smoothies

When preparing a smoothie with leafy greens remember always to blend up first a liquid base with the leafy greens and then add the remaining ingredients and blend again. If you want to add the ice, add it last. Always prefer fresh organic fruit and vegetables, although you can use frozen fruit also, like frozen bananas and berries; they will make your smoothie refreshing without using ice. Try also to use different fruit and vegetables, varying as much as you can with seasonal fruit, to make your smoothie experience even more delicious and to prevent the eventual smoothie boredom.

Smoothies can be preserved in an airtight glass container and kept in the refrigerator for max 1 to 2 days. Adding a few drops of lemon juice will work as a preservative and prevent oxidation. Another way to preserve your smoothie is to freeze it in an airtight container and when frozen it can last for a couple of weeks. You can freeze your smoothie in ice cube trays, muffin tins or in silicone molds and close them in a zipper

Guidelines for smoothies

If it is affordable, use organic or local produce when preparing smoothies or fruit bowls. When adding leafy greens to a smoothie, blend the greens with a liquid base, then add the other ingredients and blend once more. Ice goes last if you are using it; many people prefer using frozen fruits to cool of their drinks without the ice. The best fruits to use are nectarines, peaches, cherries, bananas, cherries and apricots. If you don't already have a favorite recipe, trying the recipes in this section will help you pick the blend of fruits, yogurt, and granola or other ingredients that is best for you.

Smoothies will last a day or so if it is kept in an airtight glass container in a refrigerator. As with avocado lemon or lime juice will help preserve your drink and prevent oxidation. If you want to prepare enough smoothies for longer freeze the leftovers in an airtight container, making sure there is adequate room for H₂O expansion.



Smoothie Recipes

Mango-Banana Smoothie

1 banana
1/2 cup frozen strawberries
1/2 cup frozen mango
1/2 cup Greek yogurt
1/4 cup almond milk
1/4 teaspoon turmeric
1/4 teaspoon ginger
1 Tablespoon honey
1/8 cup pumpkin seeds

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Beet Smoothie

1 boiled beet
2 teaspoon minced ginger
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 apple
1 carrot
1 pear

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Avocado Smoothie

1/2 avocado
3 celery stalks
1 lime
Fresh mint leaves
1 teaspoon linseed or hemp seed

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Red Smoothie

4 plums
3 Tablespoon raspberry
3 Tablespoon blueberry
1 Tablespoon lemon juice
1 Teaspoon linseed oil

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Green Smoothie

2 cups of spinach leaves
1 cup of water
1 Tablespoon of parsley
2 lettuce leaves
1 small cucumber
1 banana
1 Teaspoon of quinoa

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Kale Smoothie

2 cups of kale leaves
1 cup of almond milk
1 banana
1 apple
1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Melon Smoothie

1/2 cucumber
2 slices of melon
2 Teaspoon lemon juice
1 pear
3 fresh mint leaves

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Pineapple Smoothie

1/2 cup of fresh pineapple
1/2 cup of strawberry
1 banana
1/4 cup of orange juice
mint ice cubes

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Kiwi Smoothie

5 kiwi
½ cup of fresh pineapple
1 banana
basil leaves

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Sweet Smoothie

1 banana
1 sliced mango
1 cup fresh pineapple
½ coconut water

All Smoothies : Combine ingredients and ice to taste in blender and blend until smooth

Breakfast Recipes



Steel Cut Oatmeal

Ingredients

1 cup steel-cut oats, you can these buy in bulk in many natural food stores.
1 cup milk
2 cups water
1/4 teaspoon kosher or Himalayan Sea Salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 teaspoons honey
1 Tablespoon Quinoa or Hemp Seed
Top with fresh fruit and sliced almonds.

Combine oats, milk, water, salt, and cinnamon in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low.
Simmer uncovered for 15 to 20 minutes until desired thickness, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.

Greek Protein Pancakes

1 cup rolled oats
1/2 cup flour
2 tablespoon flax, quinoa, or hemp seeds
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups plain Greek yogurt
2 large eggs
2 tablespoon raw honey
2 tablespoon coconut oil
2 teaspoon cinnamon
honey and bananas for topping

Blend the rolled oats, flour, seeds, baking soda, seeds, and salt. Add the yogurt, eggs, coconut oil, honey, and cinnamon and continue blending.

Let the batter thicken, then over medium heat, warm a nonstick pan brushed lightly with coconut oil. Ladle 1/4 cup of pancake batter into the heated pan. Cook until the pancakes are golden brown.

You'll know they've reached the desired color when small bubbles form and then pop on the surface.

Flip and cook the other side for another two minutes.

Place the cooked pancakes on a baking sheet or oven safe plate to keep them warm in the oven as you continue making pancakes.

Serve with any toppings you'd like, though we are always partial to bananas and honey!

Strawberry and Banana Overnight Oats

3 cups gluten free rolled oats
1/3 cup chia seeds
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1/2 cup unsweetened shredded coconut
10 oz fresh or frozen strawberries
2 ripe bananas
2 tablespoon agave syrup or maple syrup
4 cups almond milk



In a large mixing bowl, combine the dried ingredients and set aside. In a blender or food processor, add the strawberries and bananas. Blend until the fruits are liquefied.

Add the fruit mixture, milk and syrup to the dried ingredients and mix together. Cover the mixture and place it in the refrigerator overnight. Serve the next morning with extra chopped nuts, fresh fruit,

Salsa Verde Vegetable Omelet

1 teaspoon olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped red onion
1/2 small zucchini, chopped
1/2 red bell pepper, chopped
3/4 cup sliced mushrooms
1 clove garlic
1 tablespoon chopped cilantro
salt and black pepper, to taste
8 egg whites, divided 4 eggs each
1/4 cup shredded pepper jack cheese
1/2 cup salsa verde
1/2 avocado, sliced
2 tablespoons queso fresco
cilantro

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium high heat. Add the onion, zucchini, red pepper, mushrooms, and garlic. Sauté until vegetables are tender, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cilantro and cook for 2 more minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer the vegetables to a bowl or plate.

Whisk four of the egg whites together in a small bowl. Return the skillet to the stove, and reduce heat to medium. Pour the four whisked egg whites into the hot skillet. Cook for 2-3 minutes until the eggs are set and the bottom of the egg is golden. Remove from heat. Add half of the vegetable mixture and half of the pepper jack cheese to the set egg whites and fold over to form the omelette. Gently place the omelette on a plate and make the other omelette the exact same way.

Lunch Recipes

Rice and Roasted Veggie

This recipe travels well.

2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
1/2 cup diced roasted veggies (See Roasted Veggies in the Tips section)
1/4 cup cooked brown rice.
1 clove crushed garlic
1/4 teaspoon tarragon
1/2 teaspoon fresh parsley
Heat, then add salt or pepper to taste

Garden Pizza

1 whole-grain wheat tortilla
2 tablespoons EVOO
1/4 cup diced onions
1/4 cup spinach
1/4 cup diced zucchini
1/4 cup mushroom
1/4 cup mozzarella
4 chopped sun dried tomatoes
1/2 teaspoon fresh basil
1/2 teaspoon fresh parsley

Sauté the onions, spinach, zucchini, and mushrooms. Spread them on the tortilla, add the basil, parsley sun dried tomatoes and cheese. Broil until the cheese melts.

Spinach Leek Quinoa Spanakopita

3 tablespoons olive oil plus more for brushing
2 cups sliced leek (only white) about 2 large leeks
2 spring onions sliced (only white)
1 pound spinach washed and chopped
3 tablespoons fresh mint (2 Tbs dry)
2 tablespoons fresh oregano (1 Tbs dry)
2 tablespoons dill
2 tablespoons rinsed uncooked quinoa
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
A pinch of sugar
6 phyllo sheets (defrosted if frozen)
1 teaspoon Himalayan salt
1 teaspoon pepper

Preheat oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit
In a large pan heat the 2 tablespoons olive oil and saute the leek and onion until soft. Add half of the spinach in the pan with the leek and heat until wilted and the other half of spinach in another pan or pot with the rest of the olive oil and heat until wilted. Empty all spinach and leek mixture in a large bowl and add the mint, oregano, dill, nutmeg, sugar, quinoa, salt and pepper and mix well. Let it sit for 10 minutes.
Take a phyllo sheet (keep others covered with a towel) and spread it out. Brush with olive oil and cut in 4 strips lengthwise. Place your mixture in the top corner and fold into triangles
Brush tops with a bit of olive oil and sprinkle a few drops of water.
Place on a pan brushed with olive oil, and bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden.

Tuna Salad With White Beans

3/4 pound green beans, trimmed and snapped in half
1 (12 ounce) can solid white albacore tuna, drained
1 (16 ounce) can Great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
1 (2.25 ounce) can sliced black olives, drained
1/4 medium red onion, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon dried oregano
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
Salt and ground black pepper, to taste
4 large hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered

Place green beans, 1/3 cup water and a large pinch of salt in a medium skillet. Cover, turn heat on high, and bring water to boil. Once beans start to steam, set timer and cook until tender-crisp, about 5 minutes. Immediately place them onto a cookie sheet lined with paper towels to cool.

Mix tuna, white beans, olives and onion in a medium bowl. Whisk together oregano, oil, lemon juice and zest in a medium bowl, then pour over the salad and gently stir to combine.

Makes 4 servings

Butternut Squash Bisque

Season two halved butternut squashes or three acorn squashes with EVOO one 1/2 tablespoon of fresh parsley, thyme and sage per squash half.

Roast in a 375 degree oven approximately 40 minutes or until tender.

Scoop the flesh out, putting two portions in a blender and setting the other two aside. Blend the squash until smooth, then add to a saucepan with 1 Cups of chicken or vegetable stock.

Cook until heated through, add salt and pepper to taste, then gently stir in the reserved squash and 1/2 cup. low-fat milk. Once heated through, ladle into bowls and add a dollop of non-fat sour cream or plain Greek yogurt and a dash of fresh parsley.

This soup will keep the fridge for up to a week.

Orzo Salad

1 medium-size red onion, quartered and layers separated
1 red bell pepper, seeded and quartered
1 orange bell pepper, seeded and quartered
1 large zucchini, cut lengthwise into 1/4-inch-thick slabs
1 medium yellow squash, cut lengthwise 1/4-inch
1 teaspoon lemon zest
2 Tablespoon fresh juice
10 ounces uncooked whole-wheat orzo

1/4 cup sliced pitted kalamata olives
2 tablespoons plus 1/2 teaspoon red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
2 tablespoons EVOO & Olive Oil spray
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano, divided
3 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (about 3/4 cup)
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Preheat grill to medium-high. Spritz onion, bell peppers, zucchini, and squash all over with olive oil spray, and sprinkle evenly with 1 1/2 teaspoons oregano. Place vegetables on oiled grates. Grill, uncovered, until soft and edges are browned, about 2 minutes per side for squash and zucchini and 5 minutes per side for onion and bell peppers. Remove from heat, and let cool. Chop vegetables into small pieces, and transfer to a large bowl. Prepare orzo according to package directions for al dente, omitting salt. Reserve 1/2 cup cooking liquid. Drain and rinse under cold running water; stir orzo into vegetable mixture. Add olives, vinegar, Parmesan, oil, lemon zest and juice, salt, black pepper, and reserved cooking liquid to orzo mixture; stir to combine. Gently stir in feta and remaining 1 tablespoon oregano.

Gazpacho

2 pounds ripe red tomatoes, cored and roughly cut into chunks
1 Anaheim or Italian frying pepper cored, seeded, and roughly cut into chunks
1 8" cucumber peeled and roughly cut into chunks
1 small mild red onion peeled and chunked
1 clove garlic
2 teaspoons sherry vinegar, more to taste
Himalayan Salt
1/2 cup EVOO

Combine tomatoes, pepper, cucumber, onion and garlic in a blender. Blend at high speed until smooth. Add EVOO and salt with the blender running. Strain through a strainer or a food mill, pushing all the liquid through with a spatula or the back of a ladle. Discard the solids and transfer to a container to chill, preferably overnight.

Panzanella—Tuscan Tomato and Bread Salad

1 small onion sliced thinly
red wine vinegar
4 slices stale bread -bread should be hard and dense- sliced in cubes
1 large chopped tomato 1 small cucumber sliced
1 tablespoon EVOO
handful of chopped fresh basil
salt and pepper to taste

Soak the sliced onion in a small bowl of water and 1-2 tablespoons vinegar.
In another larger bowl a mixture of 1 part vinegar and 4 parts water. Soak the bread for a few minutes and then place in colander. Squeeze out the water carefully. Place the bread in large bowl.
Add the tomato, the drained onion, cucumber and basil.
Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and salt and pepper to taste and mix carefully.
Cover and refrigerate for at least an hour.
Drizzle with olive oil right before serving.

Mediterranean Kale Salad

2 cups shredded kale
2/3 cup grape tomatoes
1/2 small cucumber
1/2 roasted red pepper
4 scallions
1/4 cup kalamata olives
1 ounce feta
1/3 cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
1/2 cup cooked bulgur
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place the kale in a bowl along and soften the kale by rubbing for a minute or so. Add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice and let sit while chopping the remaining ingredients.

Slice the grape tomatoes in half, dice the cucumbers, and mince the roasted red peppers and scallions. Place in the bowl with the kale then slice the olives in half and add to the bowl. Measure in the feta, parsley and bulgur.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, remaining tablespoon of lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Pour over the salad and toss until well combined.

Greek-Salad-Horiatiki-Salata

3 medium tomatoes, quartered
1 large cucumber, peeled and sliced
1/4 red onion, cut into thin strips
1/4 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips
10 kalamata olives
6 oz feta cheese
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Splash of red wine vinegar or lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon oregano
salt and pepper, to taste

Add all veggies and olives to a bowl. Top with feta cheese, EVOO, lemon or lime juice (or vinegar), and or favorite seasonings.

Avocado Hummus

2 ripe, avocados, peeled and seeded
1 (15-oz. can) garbanzo beans (chickpeas), rinsed and drained
1 large cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoon avocado or extra virgin olive oil, plus additional for garnish, salt to taste

Dice half the avocado and set aside. Mash remaining avocado, garbanzo beans, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil and salt together until smooth. Gently stir diced avocado into hummus mixture. Drizzle with avocado or olive oil if desired; serve with pita, or toasted sourdough rounds.

Crunchy Broccoli Walnut Salad

1 cup broccoli florets
¼ cup chopped red onion
1 cup shredded carrot
¼ cup chopped red bell pepper
3 tablespoon sunflower seeds (unsalted)
1/3 cup chopped walnuts
½ cup canned mandarin oranges

Dressing

1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
¼ cup orange juice
Black pepper, to taste

Combine carrot, broccoli, onion, bell pepper, sunflower seeds, walnuts, and oranges in a large bowl.

In a separate bowl, whisk together dressing ingredients.

Pour dressing into salad. Mix well. Let chill for at least 1 hour to let flavors combine. Serve chilled



Supper Recipes

Grilled Pesto Chicken and Tomato Kebobs

1 cup fresh basil leaves, chopped
1 clove garlic
1/4 cup grated parmigiano reggiano
kosher salt and fresh pepper to taste
3 tbsp olive oil
1-1/4 lbs skinless chicken breast, cut
into 1-inch cubes
24 cherry tomatoes
16 wooden skewers

In a food processor pulse basil, garlic, parmesan cheese, salt and pepper until smooth. Slowly add the olive oil while pulsing. Combine the raw chicken with pesto and marinate a few hours in a bowl. Soak wooden skewers in water at least 30 minutes (or use metal ones to avoid this step). Beginning and ending with chicken, thread chicken and tomatoes onto 8 pairs of parallel skewers to make 8 kebabs total.

Heat the outdoor grill or indoor grill pan over medium heat until hot. Be sure the grates are clean and spray lightly with oil. Place the chicken on the hot grill and cook about 3-4 minutes; turn and continue cooking until chicken is cooked through, about 2 to 3 minutes.

Seafood Pasta

1 package whole-wheat thin spaghetti
1/2 lb. medium non farm shrimp
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1 cup fresh spinach
1 teaspoon fresh basil
1 tablespoon parsley
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
2 tablespoons EVOO

Prepare spaghetti according to package directions, then drain. In an iron skillet, sauté 1 tablespoon of EVOO, 1 teaspoon of crushed garlic and 1 cup of sliced mushrooms on medium heat for two minutes. Add shrimp, and sauté about four minutes until shrimp are pink. Add 1 cup fresh spinach, 1 teaspoon fresh basil, 1 Tablespoon parsley and salt and pepper to taste. Cook until spinach has wilted, about two minutes. Add drained pasta and more EVOO, if needed. Add 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice. Stir constantly until well blended and heated through.

Garden Pizza

1 whole-grain wheat tortilla
2 tablespoons EVOO
1/4 cup diced onions
1/4 cup spinach
1/4 cup diced zucchini
1/4 cup mushroom
1/4 cup mozzarella
4 chopped sun dried tomatoes
1/2 teaspoon fresh basil
1/2 teaspoon fresh parsley

Sauté the onions, spinach, zucchini, and mushrooms. Spread them on the tortilla, add the basil, parsley sun dried tomatoes and cheese. Broil until the cheese melts.

Spanish Potato Salad

12 oz small red potatoes
10 oz trimmed French green beans
6 oz wedges of small tomatoes
1/3 cup small shallots
15 oz can quality tuna
2 to 3 large garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
3/4 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
1/3 cup EVOO
3 tablespoon white wine vinegar
6 oz spring greens

Place fingerling potatoes in a large pot and cover well with water. Boil for 10 minutes or until you are able to stick a fork through potatoes. Using a slotted spoon, remove potatoes from boiling water and transfer to a plate for now. Do not discard water.

Prepare a large bowl with iced water and set aside. In the same cooking pot, with the water boiling, add green beans. Cook 4 minutes or so. Drain, and place the green beans in the ice bath. When cooled enough, remove green beans from ice bath and pat dry.

Cut fingerling potatoes in halves length-wise, and place them in a large mixing bowl. Add green beans, tomatoes, shallots, tuna and garlic. Add the seasonings, EVOO and vinegar and toss to coat.

Heirloom Tomato and Cheese Pie

1/4 cup semolina flour
1 recipe sourdough pizza crust
All-purpose flour, for rolling
3 to 4 medium ripe tomatoes (1-1/2 lb. total), preferably heirloom, cored and sliced crosswise 1/4 inch thick
Kosher or Himalayan salt
2 oz. coarsely grated Gruyère (about 2/3 cup using the large holes of a box grater)

Servings: 4 to 6

border. Arrange the tomatoes over the dough in two flat, slightly overlapping concentric circles, lightly salting each circle as you go. Combine the cheese, mayonnaise, herbs, and 1/8 tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Dollop in generous tablespoons over the tomatoes. Fold the dough border over the edges of the tomatoes, pleating the dough as necessary. Bake until the crust is golden-brown and the tomatoes are tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack until warm, about 30 minutes, before cutting into wedges and serving. You can also serve it at room temperature.

The secret to keeping the crust from getting soggy despite all of the juicy, ripe tomatoes is to sprinkle a bit of semolina flour under them to absorb the juice. Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F. Sprinkle a 12×17-inch sheet of parchment with 2 Tbs. of the semolina flour. On the semolina, pat the biscuit dough into a 5-inch round. Using a floured rolling pin, roll the dough into a 13-inch round, lightly dusting with all-purpose flour to keep the dough from sticking, if necessary. Transfer the dough on the parchment to a large rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle the remaining 2 Tbs. semolina flour over the dough, leaving a 1-1/2-inch

Mediterranean Chickpea and Feta

1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt
1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon fine salt
Freshly ground black pepper
4 10-inch regular or whole-wheat tortillas
1 cup loosely packed baby spinach leaves
1/2 medium English cucumber, cut into 1/4-inch-wide sticks
1 cup roasted red peppers, thinly sliced

Place the beans in a medium bowl and smash with the back of a fork or potato masher until most of them are broken up. Add the yogurt, feta, dill, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and pepper and mix to combine.

Divide the mixture across the center of the tortillas. Spread into a 2-inch-wide band across the center of each tortilla. Top the mixture with the spinach, cucumber sticks, and peppers.

Makes 4 wraps

Mediterranean Falafel Bowl

2 cans low sodium garbanzo beans,
(15.5 oz. cans), drained and rinsed
1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves
1/2 onion, small, chopped
3 cloves garlic
1 jalapeño, medium-sized, stemmed
and seeded
1 ripe avocado, seeded and peeled
2 tablespoon fresh lemon or lime juice
1/2 teaspoon cumin
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup plain Greek 2% yogurt
1 cucumber, large, seeded
8 cups butter leaf lettuce, chopped
1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
Salt and pepper to taste, optional

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. To a food processor fitted with a metal blade, add beans, cilantro, onion, 2 garlic cloves and jalapeño. Pulse for 45 seconds, or until beans are crumbly. Add 1/4 avocado, lemon juice, cumin and salt; pulse 1 minute until uniformly combined.

Spray two baking sheets with nonstick cooking spray. Shape falafel into 16 round patties and place evenly on the baking sheets. Bake 15 minutes, until tops turn brown and are crispy, then flip patties and bake an additional 10 minutes.

Mince remaining garlic clove. To a medium bowl mix garlic with yogurt, remaining lemon juice, and salt. Finely dice 1/4 of the cucumber and stir into yogurt sauce. Chop remaining cucumber and avocado into 1/4-inch cubes to top salad.

Roasting Vegetables

4 or more cups of your favorite vegetables such as:

broccoli	red bell pepper
mushrooms	garlic
eggplant	brussel sprouts
squash	carrots
zucchini	potato
red onion	cauliflower
broccolini	leeks
turnips	beets
parsnips	green beans

Roasting vegetables is an important part of enjoying the meals prepared Mediterranean style. Although roasting vegetables minimally reduces the nutrition of vegetables, it makes up for it with taste, an important ingredient that should encourage us to eat more vegetables. Roasted vegetables should be a staple part of your new WOE.

The best way to roast is to start by cutting up the vegetables into one bite pieces, as uniform in size as possible. Coat the veggies evenly with EVOO. Seasoning is next, with less salt and more pepper along with other herbs that you might enjoy. Commonly used Mediterranean Diet herbs include: garlic, thyme, pul biber, sage, anise, rosemary, basil, cloves, chiles, cumin, lavender, marjoram, mint, oregano, fennel, parsley, pepper, savory, bay leaf, sumac, tarragon, and za'atar. You will want to explore some of these lesser known herbs through the recipes found here and in your other sources. Keep in mind that you want the herbs and oil spread evenly over the roasting veggies.

Preheat oven to 400°F Use a baking stone, roasting pan or foil lined pan. Separate the then bake for 25 minutes or more depending on the vegetable, they will each take slightly different times to be just right. You will want to add EVOO to keep the veggies from drying out. Make double or more of the recipe as they keep well and can be used with other meals such as breakfast with eggs. Using a variety of vegetables is recommended for best nutrition and taste. Roast until *al dente*.

Tuscan Butter Salmon

2 tablespoons EVOO
4 (6-oz) salmon fillets, patted dry with paper towels
himalayan salt
ground black pepper
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 cloves minced garlic
1 1/2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
2 cups baby spinach
1/2 cups heavy cream
1/4 cups grated Parmesan
1/4 cups chopped basil and parsley

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat oil. Season salmon all over with salt and pepper. When oil is shimmering but not smoking, add salmon skin-side up and cook until deeply golden, about 6 minutes. Flip over and cook 2 minutes more. Transfer to a plate.

Reduce heat to medium and add butter. When butter has melted, stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add cherry tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Cook until tomatoes are beginning to burst then add spinach and cook until spinach is beginning to wilt.

Stir in heavy cream, parmesan and herbs and bring mixture to a simmer. Reduce heat to low and simmer until sauce is slightly reduced, about 3 minutes.

Return salmon back to skillet and spoon over sauce. Simmer until salmon is cooked through, about 3 minutes more. Garnish with more herbs and squeeze lemon on top before serving.

Dessert Recipes

Sweets

As you might have guessed, fruit and nut based deserts with portion control are the Med Diet accepted. This is no place to fall off the wagon, there are so many delicious and sweet deserts recipes you will have trouble deciding on just one on any given evening. There are several

Simple Delicious Desert

Unsweetened ice cream cones with edges dipped in dark chocolate, rolled in unsweetened coconut, and filled with strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries or other fruit in season.

Fluffy Pumpkin Mousse

3 eggs
1 cup milk
3/4 cup honey
1/2 cup milk
1 (.25 ounce) package unflavored gelatin
1 1/2 cups pumpkin puree
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground mace
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons chopped crystallized ginger

Pour the 1/2 cup of water or milk into a small bowl and sprinkle the gelatin over it to soften.

Separate the eggs, placing the whites in an electric mixer bowl and the yolks in a heat-proof bowl that holds at least 2 cups.

Combine the milk, honey and spices in a heavy bottomed saucepan and heat until the honey dissolves and the mixture is steaming hot. Add the softened gelatin with its liquid and stir until it is completely dissolved.

Pour most of the hot milk mixture into the egg yolks, whisking constantly, then pour this mixture back into the pot and continue heating until it thickens and almost boils. Stir in the pumpkin and keep stirring until there are no big bubbles when you stop stirring for a

Beat the egg whites until frothy, then start adding the sugar gradually, beating until stiff peaks have formed. Fold a big spatula of the whites into the pumpkin custard, then fold in the remaining egg whites. Turn the mousse into a 6-cup metal mold that has been rinsed with cold water. Chill mousse overnight. To unmold, dip the mold in hot water for about 30 seconds then invert onto a serving platter. Alternatively, spoon the mousse into individual ramekins or wine glasses that have a tablespoon or two of chopped crystallized ginger and/or gingersnap crumbs in the bottom. Serve with whipped cream.

Pear-Fig Compote

1 lemon
2 pounds (4 to 6 medium) Bartlett pears, peeled, cored, and cut into 8 wedges
1 1/2 cups apple cider
1 package (8-ounce) dried figs, each cut into quarters
1/2 cup dried tart cherries
1/3 cup honey
1 stick cinnamon

6 Servings

Prep Time: 15 min Cook Time: 25 min

Remove peel of lemon with vegetable peeler in 1 -inch-wide strips, then squeeze 2 tablespoons juice.

In 4-quart saucepan, combine lemon peel and juice, apples, cider, figs, cherries, honey, and cinnamon; cover and heat to boiling over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, covered, 20 minutes or until apples are tender, stirring occasionally.

Pour fruit mixture into bowl; serve warm or cover and refrigerate to serve within 4 days

Sunshine Citrus Cups

3 large navel oranges
1 medium red grapefruit
1 medium white grapefruit
1 small lemon
1 small lime
1/3 cup honey
1/8 teaspoon almond extract
2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted

Serves 4
Prep Time: 30 minutes

Grate enough peel from the oranges, grapefruit, lemon and lime to measure 1 tablespoon of mixed citrus peel; set peel aside. To section citrus fruit, cut a thin slice off the bottom and top of the oranges, grapefruit, lemon and lime.

Place each fruit cut side down on a cutting board. With a sharp knife, remove peel and white pith. Holding fruit over a bowl, slice between the membrane of each section and the fruit until the knife reaches the center; remove sections and place in a glass bowl. Set 1/2 cup juice aside.

Grilled Fruit Kabobs

4 medium apples, peeled and quartered
4 medium firm pears, peeled and quartered
4 teaspoons honey
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1-1/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon

Serves 8
Prep: 10 minutes
Grilling Time: 10 minutes

Thread apples on four metal or soaked wooden skewers. Lightly spray with cooking spray. Combine honey, nutmeg and cinnamon; microwave for 1 minute and brush over fruit.

Using long-handled tongs, moisten a paper towel with cooking oil and lightly coat the grill rack. Grill, covered, over medium heat or broil 4 in. from the heat for 6-8 minutes or until golden. Turn; cook 8-10 minutes longer or until golden and tender. Serve warm.

Conclusion

To successfully transition to the Mediterranean Diet please understand that this Way of Eating can be easy to adopt and features delicious recipes and something for every taste. As opposed to yo-yo dieting and the latest

popular get thin quick diet, this diet is also easy to maintain because if done properly one does not feel deprived. Some changes will need to be made initially, but using the techniques and strategies in the *How to Make Changes Stick* section will give you the momentum you need to defeat your body's reliance on sugar, fat, and salt. The key is to savor the wonderful meals, and stay with it to enjoy the weight loss, health benefits, and feeling of well-being.

If you would like to learn more and have support for your transition please join our caring and supportive Mediterranean Diet group on Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/424937321285541/>

Buon·Appetito!