

## Mediterranean Diet

### Why Choose the Mediterranean Diet?

The Mediterranean diet is one of the most extensively researched and widely recommended dietary patterns for promoting long-term health. It emphasizes whole, nutrient-dense foods that support heart health, brain function, healthy weight, and reduced risk of chronic illness.

### Key benefits include:

- **Heart health:** Linked to lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and reduced risk of heart disease.
- **Brain protection:** Associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's and cognitive decline.
- **Weight management:** Promotes satiety and steady blood sugar, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.
- **Longevity:** Studies show people who follow this way of eating tend to live longer, healthier lives.
- **Anti-inflammatory:** Rich in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids, it helps reduce chronic inflammation.

This diet isn't restrictive, it's flexible, flavorful, and sustainable for most lifestyles. It's more about balance and enjoying real, minimally processed foods than following strict rules.

### How to Follow the Mediterranean Diet

#### Enjoy freely:

- Vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, potatoes, whole grains, herbs, spices, fish, seafood, and extra-virgin olive oil

#### Enjoy in moderation:

- Poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt

#### Enjoy only on occasion:

- Red meat, sugar-sweetened drinks, added sugars, processed meats, refined grains, refined oils, and other highly processed foods

## **Foods to Eat Regularly**

### **Vegetables**

Tomatoes, broccoli, kale, spinach, onions, cauliflower, carrots, Brussels sprouts, cucumbers, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips

### **Fruits**

Apples, bananas, oranges, pears, strawberries, grapes, dates, figs, melons, peaches

### **Nuts, Seeds, and Nut Butters**

Almonds, walnuts, macadamia nuts, hazelnuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, almond butter, peanut butter

### **Legumes**

Beans, peas, lentils, pulses, peanuts, chickpeas

### **Whole Grains**

Oats, brown rice, rye, barley, corn, buckwheat, whole wheat bread and pasta

### **Fish and Seafood**

Salmon, sardines, trout, tuna, mackerel, shrimp, oysters, clams, crab, mussels

### **Poultry**

Chicken, duck, turkey

### **Eggs**

Chicken, quail, and duck eggs

### **Dairy**

Cheese, yogurt, milk (preferably from grass-fed or minimally processed sources)

### **Herbs and Spices**

Garlic, basil, mint, rosemary, sage, nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper

### **Healthy Fats**

Extra virgin olive oil, olives, avocados, avocado oil

## Foods to Limit

### Added Sugars

Soda, candy, ice cream, table sugar, syrup, baked goods

### Refined Grains

White bread, pasta, tortillas, chips, crackers

### Trans Fats

Margarine, fried foods, and many packaged or processed foods

### Refined Oils

Soybean oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, grapeseed oil

### Processed Meats

Sausages, hot dogs, deli meats, beef jerky

### Highly Processed Foods

Fast food, microwave meals, popcorn packets, granola bars, and convenience snacks

## References

1. Estruch, R., et al. (2018). *Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease with a Mediterranean Diet Supplemented with Extra-Virgin Olive Oil or Nuts*. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 378(25), e34.
2. Willett, W. C., & Sacks, F. (1995). *Mediterranean diet pyramid: A cultural model for healthy eating*. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 61(6 Suppl), 1402S–1406S.
3. Mayo Clinic. (2023). *Mediterranean Diet: A heart-healthy eating plan*. Retrieved from [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)

## **Breakfast Ideas**

### **Greek yogurt bowl**

Plain Greek yogurt topped with blueberries, walnuts, sliced almonds, and a drizzle of honey.

### **Vegetable omelet**

Eggs cooked with spinach, tomatoes, onions, and peppers. Serve with whole grain toast and olive oil.

### **Mediterranean oatmeal**

Oats cooked with cinnamon, topped with chopped walnuts, berries, and a spoonful of plain yogurt.

### **Avocado toast**

Whole-grain bread with mashed avocado, tomatoes, olive oil, and pumpkin seeds.

### **Yogurt parfait**

Greek yogurt layered with strawberries, granola made from oats and nuts, and a drizzle of honey.

### **Mediterranean breakfast bowl**

Scrambled eggs, sautéed spinach, roasted tomatoes, avocado slices, and feta cheese.

### **Fruit and nut plate**

Fresh fruit, plain yogurt, almonds, walnuts, and a small slice of whole-grain bread.

### **Chickpea breakfast bowl**

Warm chickpeas sautéed with garlic, spinach, and olive oil, topped with a fried egg.

## Lunch Ideas

### **Mediterranean chickpea salad**

Chickpeas, cucumbers, tomatoes, olives, red onion, parsley, olive oil, and lemon.

### **Grilled chicken Mediterranean bowl**

Grilled chicken, quinoa, roasted vegetables, avocado, and olive oil.

### **Lentil soup with vegetables**

Lentils cooked with tomatoes, garlic, carrots, celery, herbs, and olive oil. Serve with whole-grain bread.

### **Mediterranean hummus plate**

Hummus, cucumbers, tomatoes, olives, roasted vegetables, and whole-grain pita.

### **Mediterranean grain bowl**

Brown rice or farro with roasted zucchini, eggplant, chickpeas, spinach, and tahini dressing.

### **Greek salad with chicken**

Mixed greens, cucumbers, tomatoes, olives, feta cheese, olive oil, and grilled chicken.

### **Mediterranean wrap**

Whole grain wrap with hummus, grilled vegetables, spinach, chickpeas, and feta.

### **White bean salad**

Cannellini beans, tomatoes, basil, olive oil, lemon, and roasted vegetables.

## **Dinner Ideas**

### **Mediterranean roasted vegetable bowl**

Roasted eggplant, zucchini, peppers, onions, chickpeas, and quinoa with olive oil.

### **Chicken with olives and tomatoes**

Grilled or baked chicken with tomatoes, olives, garlic, herbs, and olive oil. Serve with vegetables.

### **Stuffed peppers**

Bell peppers stuffed with lentils, brown rice, tomatoes, herbs, and feta cheese.

### **Vegetable and bean stew**

White beans, tomatoes, carrots, spinach, herbs, and olive oil served with whole-grain bread.

### **Mediterranean pasta**

Whole grain pasta with tomatoes, garlic, spinach, olives, olive oil, and grilled chicken.

### **Roasted vegetable and quinoa plate**

Roasted cauliflower, carrots, zucchini, quinoa, tahini, and lemon.

### **Mediterranean lentil bowl**

Lentils with roasted vegetables, avocado, greens, olive oil, and lemon.

### **Eggplant and chickpea skillet**

Eggplant, chickpeas, tomatoes, garlic, herbs, and olive oil served with brown rice.

## **Snack Ideas**

### **Mixed nuts**

Almonds, walnuts, pistachios.

### **Fresh fruit**

Apples, berries, oranges, grapes.

### **Vegetables and hummus**

Carrots, cucumbers, peppers, and celery.

- Greek yogurt with fruit
- Olives and nuts
- Whole-grain crackers with hummus
- Apple slices with almond butter
- Cottage cheese with berries
- Roasted chickpeas
- Avocado with lemon and olive oil

### **Mediterranean snack plate**

Olives, nuts, fruit, cheese, and vegetables.

## **Simple Mediterranean Meal Structure**

A simple way to build Mediterranean meals is:

- Vegetables
- Healthy fats like olive oil or nuts
- Protein such as beans, eggs, yogurt, or poultry
- Whole grains or fruit