

MAKE IT MEDITERRANEAN

You've probably heard about the Mediterranean diet – it's regularly recognized as one of the best ways of eating for good health. But do you know why the Med Way is recommended, what health benefits are linked to it and what foods actually make this diet Mediterranean? Here's the facts on one of the most popular diets around.

WHAT IS A MEDITERRANEAN STYLE OF EATING?

The Mediterranean diet is a way of eating that's based on the traditional cuisines of Greece, Italy, Spain and other countries that border the Mediterranean Sea.

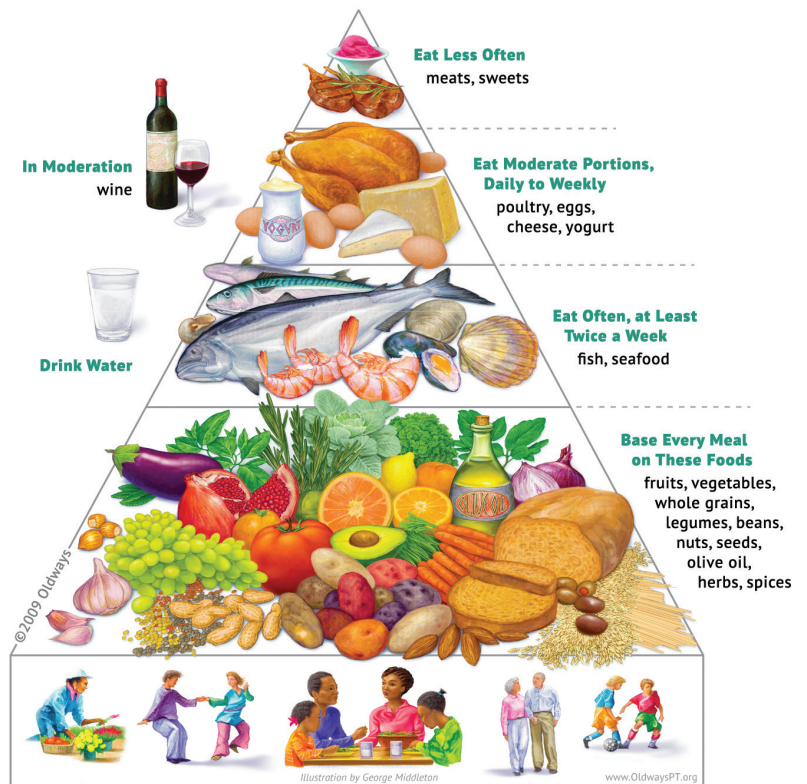
Plant-based foods – whole grains, vegetables, beans, fruits, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices – make up the basis of every meal. Fish and seafood are on the menu often, at least twice a week. Moderate portions of poultry, eggs, cheese and yogurt, daily to weekly, are included, while meats and sweets are a once-in-a-while choice. And olive oil is the main source of added fat.

The Mediterranean diet is more than what you eat. It's a lifestyle, one that also includes regular physical activity, enjoying meals with others, and wine, in moderation.

Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet

A landmark study in the 1950s put the Mediterranean diet on the map by demonstrating the health benefits among those living in the Mediterranean region, linked to their way of eating and living. Hundreds of additional studies have added to the body of scientific evidence since then examining the benefits associated with the Mediterranean diet, which according to Oldways¹ include:

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



- Longevity
- Heart health
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Certain cancers
- Weight management
- Cognitive health
- Depression

¹Oldways (<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>)

WHERE DOES HONEY FIT IN?

History shows that honey was the sweetener of choice for many traditional diets, including for those living in the Mediterranean. In fact, a famous 8,000 year old cave painting found in Spain depicts honey harvesting.

The Mediterranean region's love for honey has never waned. Maybe that's because of honey's wide array of flavors and versatility. The color, flavor, and even aroma of honey differs, depending on the nectar of flowers visited by the bees that make it. The shades of honey range from nearly colorless to dark brown, while flavors go from subtle to bold. As a general rule, the flavor of light-colored honey is milder, and the flavor of darker-colored honey is stronger.

Varietal honey may be best compared to wine in terms of climatic changes. Even the same flower blooming in the same location may produce slightly different nectar from year to year, depending on temperature and rainfall.

Did you know that honey is up to 1.5 times sweeter than sugar? With honey, a little sweetness goes a long way. So, you can use less to achieve the same amount of sweet taste.



Simple Ways to Include Honey in Mediterranean Meals and Dishes

The foods that encompass the Mediterranean diet - like dark leafy greens and other vegetables, whole grains, fish and more - are among the most nutritious around. Honey is a wonderful ingredient to complement Mediterranean foods and dishes. For example:

- ▶ **Honey pairs well with certain grains, adding a hint of sweetness and balancing bitter flavor notes when used in a dressing in whole grain side dishes and salads, like whole wheat couscous, farro, bulgur and more.**
- ▶ **Bring breakfast up a notch. A drizzle of honey can complement the tanginess of a protein-rich Greek yogurt. Add chopped fruit or berries and a sprinkle of nuts to boost yogurt's benefits.**
- ▶ **Veggies get a new twist when a drizzle of honey is added. Whether your leafy green salad, cruciferous veggies like broccoli, kale and brussels sprouts, or even carrots need a lift, a sauce or dressing with honey can make all the taste difference.**
- ▶ **Honey can be included in marinades for fish and poultry, balancing acidic ingredients, like lemon juice or vinegar.**