

The Mediterranean Diet: When Ordering Out or at Home

By [Jenna Birch](#) , January 15, 2016

Have you ever wonder why the Italians, Greeks and French look so great, showing off key markers of health and vitality, like glowing skin, bright eyes and shiny hair? The secret isn't so much superior genes, or that certain countries are hiding the fountain of youth. Instead, these countries have adopted just the right diet.

Time and time again, science has heralded the Mediterranean diet as the gold standard for healthy eating. People who follow the Mediterranean diet generally have healthier weights, higher life expectancies, lower risks of type-2 diabetes and heart disease, and lower odds of developing diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

The Mediterranean diet formula is simple. The diet features mostly plant-based foods, like fruits and veggies, whole grains, olive oil, canola oils, legumes and nuts. Fish and poultry are generally incorporated twice a week, while red meat is typically consumed just once or twice a month. Stick to it, and your brain and body will be healthier leading to a longer life.

At Home

To serve up benefits daily, you should stock your pantry and fridge with these Mediterranean essentials:

- A variety of vegetables, like eggplant, onion, tomato, bell pepper, spinach, broccoli, brussels sprouts
- Legumes like beans, lentils, chickpeas and edamame
- A variety of fruits, like grapes, blueberries, apples and blackberries
- Whole grains like whole-wheat bread and pasta, quinoa, oats and brown rice
- Fish like tuna, salmon, mahi mahi and tilapia
- Eggs and poultry
- Plant-based oils like olive, soybean, flaxseed and canola
- Nuts like almonds and pistachios

- Extras like lemon juice, thyme, oregano, basil, garlic, pesto for seasoning

At home, cook with plant oils instead of butter. Make fish twice a week, with a variety of great seasonings. As with any healthy diet, load up on fruits and veggies, along with modest whole grains. It is also smart to add legumes like beans, chickpeas and lentils; which are low in fat and high in key nutrients like potassium, magnesium and iron.

At Restaurants

When ordering out, look for dishes based on the foundational Mediterranean foods you probably have in your fridge back home. Common items on the menu that you can mix and match for a Mediterranean friendly meal include:

- Salmon or tilapia with broccoli or mixed vegetables
- Quinoa salad with oil-based dressing
- Omelet with veggies and feta
- White bean stew or minestrone
- Hummus appetizer with vegetables or whole-grain pita bread for dipping
- Whole-wheat pasta with olive oil, spinach, pesto or broccoli
- Whole-wheat tortilla sandwich wrap with chicken or fish, veggies and avocado

Remember that you can generally adapt anything on a restaurant menu within reason. Ask to substitute a fiber-rich vegetable side for white potatoes to go with your fish, make your own salad dressing with a little oil and vinegar, or swap white rice for brown rice or quinoa. Get creative with your orders, while sticking to that classic Mediterranean playbook for good health.

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