

# The Mediterranean Diet

If you are looking for a diet that is high in nutrients, rich in taste, and heart healthy — the Mediterranean Diet is for you. The research is mounting that this diet, which is inspired by the traditional eating style of some countries in the Mediterranean basin, is effective in reducing not only cardiovascular disease, but also Type 2 diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

The basic components of the Mediterranean diet are:

- **Healthy fats.** The Mediterranean diet is not low in fat, but focuses on healthy fats such as olive oil or canola oil and fats high in omega-3 fatty acids found in nuts, avocados, salmon, tuna and flaxseed.

- **Whole grains.** Whole grains including bread, pasta, polenta, rice and couscous are an important part of the Mediterranean way of eating. Processing strips the grain of its disease fighting fiber, vitamins, minerals and nutrients. The fiber in whole grains can also help you feel fuller longer.

- **More fish, nuts and legumes; less red meat.** The Mediterranean diet does include some lean red meat and poultry, but is predominantly made up of fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, sardines, anchovies, herring, mackerel and trout. Legumes such as white beans, lentils, and chickpeas, (or garbanzo beans) are high in protein and a good source of fiber. Tree nuts such as walnuts, almonds, pecans and hazelnuts are another good source of protein. Although tree nuts are high in fat, (limit to one handful per day) they contain healthy fats and are low in saturated fat. Walnuts are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids and are delicious in a green salad!

- **Fresh fruits and vegetables.** Fresh fruit is the dessert of choice for Mediterranean people rather than pastries or sweets. If you're pressed for time, cut up fruit ahead of time for quick serving; it is just as nutritious as freshly cut fruit. Mediterranean people also feast on a variety of vegetables; spinach, broccoli, mushrooms, eggplant and tomatoes to name a few.

- **Red Wine.** Many Mediterranean people consume small amounts of red wine on a daily basis; typically only 3-6 ounces per day. Red wine contains antioxidants called flavonoids which help prevent blood clots from forming.

In addition to healthy eating, Mediterranean people tend to eat small portions at meals and stay active by walking nearly everywhere they go.

We can all benefit from adopting a Mediterranean way of eating. Even small changes can make a difference. Try this delicious heart-healthy recipe and give it a try!

## Wild Rice and Lentil Salad

*Recipe by Ellen Ecker Ogden from The Oldways Table*

This main-dish salad combines flavors and textures that can easily be adapted depending on the season. While this recipe calls for arugula and vine-ripened tomatoes, which are at their peak in the summer, it is equally delicious in the fall or winter substituting kale

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