



MEDITERRANEAN FOODS ALLIANCE

MEDMONTHLY NUTRITION NEWS





JANUARY ~ NATIONAL OATMEAL MONTH

National Oatmeal Month

Despite the overwhelming array of sugary breakfast cereals on the market, Americans are still listening to their moms and grandmas who told them to "eat your oatmeal; it's good for you." About three-fourths of American households have oatmeal in their cupboards at any given time, and according to the Quaker Oats Company, we gobbled up 470 million bowls in one month! Since January has been deemed National Oatmeal Month, it is a perfect time to recognize oatmeal for all of its versatility, nutritional value, and great taste.

Oatmeal has come a long way. Once considered suitable only for animal feed, doctors and dietitians alike now tout oatmeal and oatmeal products for all of their health benefits. Oatmeal's soluble fiber can help lower cholesterol and may reduce blood pressure as well. In addition, a hearty bowl of oats keeps people feeling full, so there is less need to snack in between meals.

Take a look below for a few ways to get more oatmeal into your diet:

1. Take your standard bowl of oatmeal and give it a makeover.
 - ✦ Cook your oats in almond or soymilk for a subtle new taste
 - ✦ Add canned pumpkin or squash with nutmeg, cinnamon and honey
 - ✦ Incorporate applesauce or a tablespoon of peanut butter
 - ✦ Sprinkle it with raisins, currants, chocolate chips, flax seeds, or berries
2. Add oats to breads, muffins, and pancakes, or use oatmeal in place of half of the flour for a tasty piecrust.
3. Oatmeal also works with savory dishes – mix it into meatballs, use it to thicken stews or chili, or grind oatmeal in a food processor with your favorite spices and create a coating for poultry before baking.



Oatmeal "Risotto" with Cherry Tomatoes and Basil

This elegant dish is perfect for entertaining friends and family.

Ingredients

3 cups chicken broth
1 cup quick oats
¼ cup grapeseed oil
1-2 garlic cloves, sliced thin
10 cherry tomatoes, quartered
5 basil leaves, torn
coarse salt & pepper to taste
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan or cheddar cheese (or try shredded mozzarella)

Preparation

In a saucepan, bring chicken broth to a boil. Add oats, return to a boil and simmer for 5 minutes. Let it cool completely, then refrigerate for 4 hours so the oatmeal firms up nicely.

Heat grapeseed oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and sauté until golden brown (be careful not to burn the garlic). Add cherry tomatoes, sauté quickly, then add basil and cook another 30 seconds.

Fold in oatmeal, season with salt and pepper, and mix to incorporate ingredients and warm the oatmeal. Distribute on plates, top with cheese and garnish with additional fresh basil.

Recipe courtesy of German Lam



FEBRUARY ~ MED DIET AND YOUR HEART

Med Diet and Your Heart

February is American Heart Month! To celebrate, show your heart some love by borrowing from the traditions of the Mediterranean. Thousands of scientific studies (and the American Heart Association!) declare the Mediterranean Diet is one of the world's healthiest. While it's the whole diet that makes the health difference, there are some foods, rich in healthy fats and antioxidants, that are extra beneficial for heart health. Found in the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, these foods can decrease your chance of developing heart disease, improve your overall health and, best of all, taste great!

◆ Extra-Virgin Olive Oil

Rich in monounsaturated fats, olive oil lowers bad (LDL) cholesterol, reducing the risk of developing heart disease.

Tip: Use healthful olive oil instead of butter when sautéing or roasting vegetables.

◆ Fish

Salmon is super-rich in omega-3 fatty acids that reduce blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease. Nutrition scientists, the AHA and Oldways suggest eating fish twice a week to benefit from its heart-healthy fats.

Tip: Grill or broil salmon and serve with a green vegetable and a squeeze of lemon juice for added flavor.

◆ Whole Grains

Oatmeal, one of the many whole grain options, is a fiber-rich super food that may help lower cholesterol and help keep arteries clear. It also offers healthy unsaturated fats, folate and potassium.

Tip: Start your day with a steaming bowl of healthy oatmeal.

◆ Nuts

Nuts and peanuts are good sources of protein and fiber. They also have plenty of mono- and poly-unsaturated fats, good for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Tip: Sprinkle peanuts and nuts on salads, pastas, and cereals or add them to muffin batters for an extra crunch.

◆ Vegetables

Vegetables have essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that can help protect the body from chronic diseases. Spinach, with high levels of folate, potassium and B-complex vitamins, is a standout for heart health.

Tip: Use spinach instead of lettuce for a nutrient-packed salad or add it to sandwiches, wraps or omelets.

◆ More Herbs and Spices ~ Less Salt

Herbs and spices contain important phytonutrients that are essential to good health. They are a healthy substitute for salt, which can increase blood pressure.

Tip: Add a pinch of dried or fresh herbs or spices to soups, dressings and sauces to heighten flavor without adding salt.

◆ Exercise!

For overall good health including heart health, make exercise a regular part of your day, just like brushing your teeth or checking your email.

Tip: Meet up with a friend or family member and try to walk for 30 minutes at least 3 times a week.



FEBRUARY ~ MED DIET AND YOUR HEART

Med Diet and Your Heart ~ Recipes

Now that you know what to eat to maintain a healthy heart, it's time to eat! Check out the two recipes below. The first recipe will give your heart its nut quota and the second will satisfy your body and your heart on a cold winter morning.

Peanut Hummus

Makes 8 cups

A perfect dip for carrots or pita, or spread on your favorite sandwich for some added zip!

Ingredients

3 cups canned garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed	2/3 cup creamy peanut butter water as needed
1/2 cup lemon juice	1 bunch italian parsley, finely chopped
1/4 cup peanut oil	1 jalapeño, seeds removed, finely chopped
1/2 teaspoon salt	2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1/4 teaspoon pepper	salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

In food processor, combine garbanzo beans, lemon juice, peanut oil, salt, pepper, and peanut butter and process until smooth, adding water if mixture seems dry.

Make topping by combining parsley, jalapeño, and garlic in a small bowl. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Recipe courtesy of The Peanut Institute



Creamy Spiced Oatmeal

Serves 4

Cook oatmeal for a leisurely weekend breakfast and inject it with spices. To enjoy it on busy weekday mornings, make extra, store it in the refrigerator in a large covered container, and reheat individual servings in the microwave as needed.

Ingredients

1 cup milk (or altn. milk of choice)	1 bay leaf
1/2 cup water	1 cup rolled oats
1 teaspoon cinnamon	1/2 cup honey
1 teaspoon nutmeg	1 1/2 cup berries
4 allspice berries (optional)	1/2 cup roasted almonds, chopped

Preparation

In a medium saucepan heat the milk and water with the spices and bay leaf over medium heat. Reduce the heat to low and steep for 2 minutes. Add the oats and cook, stirring occasionally, until the oats are tender, between 5 and 15 minutes. Remove from the heat and cover for a minute. Discard the bay leaf and whole spices. Portion into bowls and drizzle with honey, then top with the berries and almonds, if desired.

Recipe courtesy of Oldways



MARCH ~ 12 WAYS WITH AVOCADOS

Avocados and the Med Diet

Avocados head the list of healthy fruits, although they're often categorized as a vegetable since they taste so great in salads. Smooth, buttery, and needing nothing but a quick peel to eat as a healthy snack, they contain "good" fats, are linked to reduced risk of chronic diseases, and rank as one of the "super foods" of the Mediterranean Diet. Since they're typically eaten fresh, their important nutrients aren't lost in processing or heating. Here are twelve delicious ways to enjoy their creamy flavor and lovely color.

- ◆ Mash half an avocado with a fork and spread it on whole-grain bread or toast for a quick, nourishing breakfast.
- ◆ Add diced avocado to eggs or omelets before cooking.
- ◆ Top baked potatoes with avocado butter, made by mashing a ripe avocado with one tablespoon of lemon or lime juice, salt, and pepper.
- ◆ Garnish vegetable, fruit, and grain salads with diced avocado, and then toss gently to mix.
- ◆ Stuff avocado halves with rice and olives and garnish with a sprinkling of bleu cheese.
- ◆ Layer sliced avocado and smoked salmon on a platter for a quick and easy hors d'oeuvre or appetizer.
- ◆ Combine avocados with berries, apples, and mango chunks for a tasty fruit salad.
- ◆ Make a creamy potato salad with chopped avocados, boiled new potatoes, diced celery, lemon juice, wine, and olive oil.
- ◆ Create a deliciously different salsa by combining diced avocado, chopped tomatoes, corn kernels, chopped cilantro, pepper, and cayenne.
- ◆ Add diced avocado, diced bell pepper, and sliced scallions to cooked pasta, along with olive oil, vinegar, and mustard for a tasty pasta salad.
- ◆ Put sliced avocado in wraps and sandwiches.
- ◆ Substitute avocado for another fruit in any sorbet recipe and include lemon or lime juice to bring out its flavor.



Mediterranean Avocado Salad with Mint Vinaigrette

Serves 4

The mint and cucumber make a winning combination in this tasty salad.

Ingredients

Salad

1 head romaine lettuce, cut crosswise into 3/4-inch slices
 1 ripe avocado, peeled, seeded and sliced crosswise
 1 medium cucumber, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
 1 small red onion, diced into 1/2-inch pieces
 12 cherry tomatoes, cut in half

Mint Vinaigrette

1 tablespoon mustard seeds
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon each ground allspice, ground cloves, ground nutmeg

Preparation

Salad

In a large salad bowl, combine romaine, avocado, cucumber, onion and tomatoes; chill briefly.

Mint Vinaigrette

Combine all dressing ingredients in a jar with a tight fitting lid, shake well and serve. If prepared in advance shake again before adding to salad.

Recipe courtesy of the California Avocado Commission



APRIL ~ ARTICHOKE

Artichokes

Did you know that artichokes were a forbidden food for women living in the sixteenth-century? At that time, the artichoke was considered an aphrodisiac and thus reserved for men only. Fortunately, our views have changed quite a bit, and now both men and women are privy to the pleasures of the artichoke. However, even though our views have changed, the artichoke's appearance still seems straight out of medieval times. Suited up in its green coat of prickly armor, an artichoke can be a little intimidating to those who have never cooked one. But once you've mastered preparing and cooking them, they are sure to become a healthy favorite.

How do you know which one to buy at the store? Begin with artichokes that feel the heaviest and firmest. Now examine the exterior. Look for a healthy green color with compact center leaves and an overall look of freshness. Avoid artichokes whose leaves are spread apart, wilting or drying out. Once you have made a wise selection, be sure to keep them in their freshest state. For refrigerated storage, slice a dime width off of the artichoke stem, sprinkle the stems with water and refrigerate in an airtight plastic bag. It's best to cook them within five to seven days after purchase. Artichokes can be steamed, baked, grilled or boiled, but they do require a few basic steps before cooking begins:

*First, cut about one inch from the top of the artichoke, then trim the stem about one half inch or remove the stem if you need it to "sit up" on a plate for stuffing or filling.

*Next, use your scissors to snip off the thorns on the tip of the artichoke petals. To prevent the artichoke from browning after it is cut, rub the cut portion of the artichoke with the juice of a fresh lemon. Don't be afraid to spread open the petals slightly to catch any seasoning you may use for flavor. Now, your artichoke is ready to cook!

Even though there are a few extra prep steps, artichokes are well worth the effort. According to the USDA, a boiled, medium-sized artichoke contains 64 calories, 14g of carbohydrates (with a whopping 10 grams of fiber!), and 3.5g of protein. It also contains about 25% of the daily value for folate. In addition, they have powerful antioxidant properties that may help the liver regenerate healthy tissue.



Parmesan Stuffed Artichokes

Serves 2 ~ This simple recipe is a great way to introduce novices to the splendors of artichokes.

Ingredients

2 trimmed and cooked artichokes
1/2 cup unseasoned dried bread crumbs
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon freshly grated Romano cheese
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 clove garlic, minced
1 tablespoon melted butter
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
5 basil leaves, minced
Freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Place the artichokes upright in a nonreactive baking pan just large enough to hold them. Gently open up leaves a bit, loosening them far enough to stuff. Combine the bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, Romano cheese, oregano, garlic, butter, olive oil, basil, and pepper to taste in a small bowl. With a spoon, place this stuffing between the layers of artichoke leaves. Use half the stuffing for each artichoke.

Bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes until golden brown and warm inside. Serve hot.

Recipe courtesy of Steve Petusevsky for The Oldways Table.



MAY ~ 12 WAYS WITH CHERRIES

Cherries and the Med Diet

Cherry trees in blossom are one of the great delights of spring and, eventually, form the prized fruit of early summer. From the tart, fire-engine red of the Michigan cherry, Montmorency, to the dark, sweet-tasting Bing, these shining jewels of summer lend their flavor to everything from appetizers and soups to salads, sauces, and of course, dessert. Cherries are thought to be first domesticated in Greece or Turkey, and have been enjoyed for centuries in the Mediterranean. Why not eat like the Romans, and pick some up today? If you can resist eating the whole bag in one go, here are 12 tasty tips to help you get the most out of this delicious summer fruit.

- ◆ Cherries have a considerable amount of melatonin, a naturally occurring antioxidant hormone produced by the brain to help regulate sleep. Enjoy a handful of cherries for your after dinner treat and have sweet dreams.
- ◆ To complement the flavors of grilled meats, try topping each piece with fresh cherry chutney.
- ◆ Dress up your summer salads by adding fresh, sliced cherries.
- ◆ For a bright start in the morning, whip up a breakfast smoothie or top your cereal or yogurt with fresh cherries.
- ◆ Dried cherries are a great addition to couscous or rice dishes.
- ◆ Make a tropical cherry salsa by combining 1 chopped mango, 1 cup halved, pitted tart cherries, 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint, 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar and 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper.
- ◆ Cherries make an excellent addition to chicken salad sandwiches or wraps.
- ◆ Sprinkle a few dried cherries into your chocolate or oatmeal cookie dough and enjoy an extra flavor burst in each cookie.
- ◆ Marry cherries with summer berries to create a delicious fruit cobbler.
- ◆ Cool off this summer with homemade cherry sorbet.
- ◆ Add a dash of cherry juice to your favorite summer beverage – cherry lemonade anyone?
- ◆ Cherries can be combined with sugar, pectin and lemon juice to create homemade cherry jam.



Cherry Chutney

Try this with grilled chicken or roast pork.
Makes about 4 cups

Ingredients

3 cups pitted and fresh cherries	1 tablespoon mustard seeds
1 1/2 cups cider vinegar	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup chopped onions	1/4 teaspoon each ground allspice, ground
3/4 cup brown sugar	cloves, ground nutmeg
3/4 cup raisins	

Preparation

Combine all ingredients in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, covered, for one hour. Uncover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened, about 30 minutes more. Remove from heat and let cool at room temperature. Keep refrigerated until ready to use.

Recipe courtesy of Cherry Growers of California



JUNE ~ NATIONAL FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MONTH

National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month

Did you know that there is not one state in the country that meets the national goals for daily fruit and vegetable consumption? According to Healthy People 2010, the goal is for at least 75% of Americans to be eating at least 2 fruits daily and for 50% to be eating at least 3 vegetables daily. However, only 33% and 27% of adults are meeting these goals, respectively.

Perhaps the lack of vegetable consumption is a silent rebellion against our mother's daily attribution telling us to "Eat your vegetables." Whatever the reason, it may be time to make a few changes. Your body will thank you for it

June is National Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month, which makes it the perfect time to focus on getting more of these nutritional goodies into your diet. Fruits and vegetables provide us with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and plenty of disease-fighting antioxidants. In fact, it's well established that people who eat fruits and vegetables daily, as part of an overall healthy diet, are likely to reduce their risk of many chronic illnesses, including type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

The more the better, with fruits and vegetables.. Here are few a tips that will help you get the most out of fruit and vegetable purchases next time you are at the grocery store:

- ◆ Sometimes, canned fruits and vegetables are packed in syrup. Look for label descriptions such as "packed in its own juices" or "unsweetened" for fewer calories and less sugar.
- ◆ Canned soups and vegetables can be quite high in salt. If you are cutting back on sodium, look for descriptions such as "no salt added" and "reduced sodium" on the labels of canned vegetables.
- ◆ When in the frozen food section, opt for naked vegetables. Rich creamy sauces that often accompany the veggies can be high in fat and calories.

**Tips adapted from the ADA*



Bruschetta with Roasted Peppers & Mozzarella

Serves 8

Roasting peppers intensifies their natural sweetness and gives them a depth of flavor that marries beautifully with the mild cheese in this pretty antipasto.

Ingredients

4 roasted bell peppers, peeled, seeded and sliced	8 1/2-inch-thick slices whole-wheat bread
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil	1 clove garlic, peeled and cut in half
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar	2 ounces fresh mozzarella, cut into thin strips
Salt & freshly ground pepper, to taste	2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

Preparation

Preheat broiler. Combine roasted peppers, basil and vinegar in a medium bowl. Season with salt and pepper.

Toast or grill bread slices lightly. Rub both sides of the bread with the cut sides of the garlic. Place bread on a baking sheet; top with the roasted peppers. Lay mozzarella strips on a diagonal over the roasted peppers and drizzle with oil.

Broil bruschetta 6 inches from the heat source until the cheese melts and starts to brown. Serve hot.

Recipe courtesy of Eating Well



JULY ~ MEDITERRANEAN 4TH OF JULY

Olives and the 4th of July

Olives are one of the most important ingredients in the Mediterranean Diet and there are dozens of ways to use them daily - on their own as snacks and appetizers, or as important components in dips, sauces, salads, grain and pasta dishes, stews, and even baked goods. And as a bonus, like olive oil, they're an excellent source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, natural antioxidants, and iron.

Don't forget the olives this Fourth of July! Put them out with the carrot and celery sticks and watch them disappear. Dice a few olives and blend with Greek yogurt, Dijon mustard, and cooked egg yolks to make a deliciously different filling for that platter of deviled eggs. For a cookout, thread olives on skewers along with bell pepper chunks and mushrooms, and grill until sizzling. If sandwiches are on the menu, stir chopped olives into tuna, chicken, or seafood salad. And, for a decidedly different treat, combine a few olives with strawberries or watermelon chunks, chill, and serve dusted with black pepper.

Here are two easy recipes to try while you're waiting for the fireworks to begin:

Olive and Pepper Salad

Serves 6

Assemble this salad ahead of time and let it come to room temperature before adding embellishments such as hard-cooked eggs, potatoes, or mozzarella.

Ingredients

6 bell peppers, preferably a combination of red and yellow
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon coarse salt
7 anchovy fillets, coarsely chopped (about 1 tablespoon packed)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pitted black oil-cured olives
2 tablespoons small capers, drained
2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon peperoncino flakes, or to taste
1 plump garlic clove, peeled and thinly sliced

Preparation

Heat the oven to 350°F. Rub the peppers all over with 3 tablespoons of the olive oil, season with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, and place on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Roast for 30 minutes or so, turning the peppers occasionally, until their skins are wrinkled and slightly charred.

Let the peppers cool completely. Slice them in half through the stem end, discard the stem, peel off the skin, and scrape out the seeds. Slice the halves into 1-inch strips, and lay them in a sieve to drain and dry.

Put the drained peppers in a large bowl, and scatter on the top the chopped anchovies, olives, capers, parsley, peperoncino, and garlic. Season with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt, and drizzle over it the remaining 3 tablespoons of olive oil. Tumble and toss to coat everything well. Let the salad sit, so the flavors blend, for 15 minutes (or longer) before serving.

Recipe from Lidia Cooks from the Heart of Italy, by Lidia Matticchio Bastianich and Tanya Bastianich Manuali (Alfred A. Knopf),



AUGUST ~ LAZY DAYS OF SUMMER

Summertime and the Med Diet

There's no time like right now, while summer is still here, to kick back and savor some really easy, no fuss dinners, the kind of simple meals you might put together if your partner is out of town, or you're enjoying a solo meal with a good book.

The keys are maximizing what you have on hand and creating delicious flavors by using some Mediterranean Diet basics - the best tasting extra-virgin olive oil you can find, a fragrant vinegar, fresh vegetables, herbs, and hummus - and making several easy but special things, such as stuffed olives or eggs, ahead of time, so all you need to do is open the refrigerator and put them on your plate. This style of low-key eating depends on a few flavorful dips or sauces that come together quickly and provide a way to elevate a piece of whole grain bread and a few raw vegetables, or some lettuce, into bona fide meal components.

Think about what you have in the pantry and in the refrigerator. Canned tuna or sardines, canned beans, a few cubes of cheese, or a handful of nuts are great additions to a no fuss meal. And don't forget the leftovers. A few slices of cooked, cold chicken or meat, or a few cooked shrimp, topped with an olive-oil-based sauce, become an instant dinner.

Ready to relax this weekend? Here are a few ideas

- ♦ **Med hummus:** Instead of mayonnaise, use hummus to lend a spicy character to these favorite stuffed foods. Experiment with different flavors, such as roasted red pepper, garlic, tomato-basil, lemon, or horseradish hummus.
- ♦ **Med Avocados:** Slice an avocado in half, remove the pit, and fill with red pepper hummus. (If you only need one of the halves, brush the surface of the unused portion with lemon or lime juice, cover with plastic wrap, or put in an air-tight container to prevent browning.)
- ♦ **Med Eggs:** Cook 3 extra-large eggs. When cool enough to handle, peel and slice lengthwise. Remove the yolks and reserve for salad. Stuff the eggs with hummus. Or, mash the yolks with a few teaspoons of hummus and mound the filling into the eggs.
- ♦ **Med Olives:** Fill a pastry gun with hummus. Drain some large pitted olives and arrange them on a platter. Squeeze the hummus into the olives, and serve with cherry tomatoes.



Middle Eastern Fresh Herb Salsa

Serves 6

Buy the freshest herbs you can find for this delicious dip. Serve it with toasted triangles of pita bread, or as a sauce for leftover grilled chicken or fish.

Ingredients

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil	1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
1 tablespoon fresh parsley leaves	1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro leaves	1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
1 scallion, trimmed and diced	1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves	Cayenne pepper

Preparations

Combine all ingredients except the cumin and salt and pepper in the container of a blender and blend on high speed until smooth. Season with salt and pepper to taste and a large pinch of cayenne.

Recipe courtesy of Pompeian



SEPTEMBER ~ THINKING ABOUT POTATOES

Thinking about Potatoes

Although we're still enjoying lovely ripe tomatoes, corn, and lettuce, fresh fall vegetables are just around the corner. Starting later this month, be on the lookout for new varieties of potatoes, including oblong fingerlings, great for potato salad, and even blue and purple ones.

How do potatoes fit into your life? The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid includes a variety of potatoes in the same level as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, herbs, spices, beans, legumes, nuts, and olive oil. These are the go-to foods to build your daily meals upon.

Since potatoes have a lot going for them, it's well worth finding new ways to use them. A medium-sized potato contains nearly half the recommended daily value of vitamin C, and is also a good source of vitamin B6. With skin, a potato has more potassium than a banana, a serving of broccoli, or an orange, and it's a source of dietary fiber, a complex carbohydrate known to increase satiety.

Before cooking potatoes, gently scrub them with a vegetable brush under cool running water. The maximum nutrients are preserved when potatoes are cooked and eaten with the skin on. If you want to peel them, use a sharp knife or peeler and keep the peeling close to the skin.

Cut, uncooked potatoes sometimes discolor, which is simply a result of the carbohydrate reacting with oxygen in the air. They're still safe to eat, and the color usually disappears during cooking. To prevent it, cook potatoes as soon as you cut them, or keep them in cold water for up to two hours before cooking.



Mediterranean Lemon Chicken and Potatoes

Serves 4

This full-meal recipe can be prepared in the oven or on the grill - and thanks to the foil packaging, it's virtually mess-free!

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 lb. Yukon potatoes, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup Greek or olive oil vinaigrette
- 1/3 cup quartered Kalamata olives (optional)
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 medium tomato, diced

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 400°F or heat a grill. Mix all ingredients except the tomatoes in a large bowl. Place equal amounts of the mixture onto 4 large squares of heavy-duty foil. Fold in the top and the sides of each to enclose the filling, leaving some "head room" for air to circulate.

Bake for 30 minutes or grill over medium heat for about 25 to 30 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and the potatoes are soft. Carefully open the packets and sprinkle equal amounts of tomato over each.

Recipe courtesy of US Potatoes



OCTOBER ~ NATIONAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Your Diet May Reduce Breast Cancer Risk

Aside from non-melanoma skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women, and it is the number one cause of death in Hispanic women, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In efforts to combat its prevalence, increasing attention is being paid to overall dietary patterns and their relationship to health, rather than single nutrients or foods. In one such study of more than 50,000 African-American women, researchers found that eating a "prudent diet" (high in fruits, vegetables, fish and whole grains) rather than a "Western diet" (more refined grains, processed meats, sweets) cut the risk of breast cancer. The findings were especially strong for thinner, younger women and for certain types of breast cancer.

And, adding as little as 10 teaspoons of olive oil to your daily diet could help protect you against breast cancer, Spanish researchers say. Their findings show that olive oil mounts a multi-pronged attack on cancer tumors, stunting their growth, driving their cells to implode and protecting against potentially cancerous damage to DNA. These are two great reasons to follow the Mediterranean Diet, which calls for making vegetables, fruits, and whole grains a major part of your daily diet, with protein from beans, seafood, and poultry, plus small amounts of cheese and yogurt. Follow these tips for good health:

1. **Eat several servings of fruits and vegetables each day.** Choose a variety of greens, cucumbers, avocados, and sprouts for salads, plus peppers, carrots, celery, broccoli and summer squash to eat raw with hummus, or to sauté or stir fry for a quick and easy meal.
2. **Choose calcium-rich foods** such as Greek yogurt, beans, broccoli, spinach, kale, Brussels sprouts, and collard greens.
3. **Consume foods that contain healthy fats** to help you feel full after a meal, and reduce cravings and snack attacks. These include extra-virgin olive oil, nuts, peanuts, olives, and seafood. Plan to enjoy two servings of fish per week.
4. **Drink in moderation if you like wine:** one glass per day for women, with a meal.



Sweet Potato, Chickpea and Parsnip Soup

This delicious autumn soup checks off all the boxes! Packed with hearty vegetables, calcium from yogurt, and healthy fat from olive oil, it is not only satisfying but good for your health.

Ingredients

2 tablespoon olive oil
 1 onion, chopped
 1/4 teaspoon fennel seeds
 4 sweet potatoes, cut into large chunks
 2 parsnips, peeled and cut into large chunks
 5 cloves garlic, minced
 1 teaspoon fresh ginger
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 (15 ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
 1 tomato, finely chopped
 2 cups vegetable broth
 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
 4 ounce plain yogurt
 2 tablespoons lime juice

Preparation

- ♦ In a large skillet over a medium flame, heat olive oil until hot; add onion, fennel seeds, sweet potatoes, parsnips, garlic and ginger. Gently stir. Reduce heat to a low; cover and cook for 15 minutes.
- ♦ Add cinnamon, chickpeas, tomato and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer for 35-45 minutes or until the sweet potatoes and parsnips are tender and chickpeas are soft.
- ♦ Season with sea salt and white pepper, to taste. Place the mixture into a blender; add yogurt and lime juice; blend well leaving some chunky parts of the vegetables. Serve warm.

** Recipe courtesy of Greek Gods*



OCTOBER ~ NATIONAL CELIAC AWARENESS MONTH

Celiac Disease

According to the Celiac Disease Foundation, one out of 133 people in the United States suffers from Celiac Disease, a chronic disorder that requires they adhere to a gluten free diet for life. If you or someone in your household can't eat gluten – a protein in wheat, barley and related grains – it's important to follow some basic rules when shopping for food:

- 1. Choose grains carefully.** Gluten-intolerant people can eat whole grains, including amaranth, buckwheat, corn, millet, quinoa, rice, teff, and wild rice. (Oats are inherently gluten-free, but may be contaminated with wheat during growing or processing; contact the manufacturer to learn more about a specific product.)
- 2. Get creative.** Tasty recipes have been developed for gluten-intolerant people, using gluten-free grains along with foods such as nuts, arrowroot, beans, chestnuts, potatoes, soy, and tapioca, all of which are gluten-free. Some of these ingredients make deliciously healthy breakfast cereals and side dishes, while others are ground into flours for flavorful baked goods such as pizza, desserts, and breads.
- 3. Read labels.** Gluten hides in many unsuspecting places such as candy, sauces, and malt flavoring. Other ingredients appear suspicious, but may be safe. If in doubt concerning a particular food, ask the manufacturer about the ingredients and the standards they use to assure your safety. In the U.S., the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act mandates that labels on foods manufactured after January, 2006, will list the word “wheat” to indicate the presence of wheat. But the label doesn't have to list other gluten-containing grains such as barley, rye, spelt, kamut, or triticale.
- 4. Follow the Mediterranean Diet.** This healthy way of eating is based upon a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, grains, nuts, beans, and small amounts of dairy, seafood and poultry. It features unprocessed foods, high in nutrients and fiber over those that are highly processed and may contain additives and preservatives that can be potentially harmful to Celiac patients.



Gluten-Free Apple Crisp

In autumn, a warm apple crisp makes a great dessert. Top with ice cream or a dollop of whipped cream, if you'd like.

Ingredients

For the fruit filling:

4 cups sliced apples

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

For the crumble topping:

1 stick (1/2 cup) butter or trans-free margarine

3/4 cup of sugar or brown sugar

3/4 cup sorghum flour

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Slice apples into an 8 x 8 inch greased pan. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Combine crumble ingredients and sprinkle evenly over apples.

Bake at 350°F for approximately 1 hour or until topping turns light brown.

**This recipe is provided courtesy of Twin Valley Mills, LLC.*



NOVEMBER ~ NATIONAL POMEGRANATE MONTH

Pomegranates and the Med Diet

November is synonymous with turkey, stuffing, and all the rest, but did you know it is also National Pomegranate Month? This month it may be time to pay this ruby red fruit a little attention, because as it turns out, it may just be the one of the healthiest fruits available this season. Pomegranates contain almost half your daily recommendation for Vitamin C as well as natural phytonutrients, antioxidants, and fiber. In addition, research shows that pomegranate juice may lower the risk of heart attacks and protect against prostate cancer.

Pomegranates have grown on fences all around southern Europe and have been incorporated into meals throughout the Mediterranean for centuries. Look below for a few facts and helpful tidbits that will have you enjoying this fantastic fruit in no time:

Where did pomegranates originate?

The pomegranate was native to lands such as Afghanistan and Pakistan, mainly cultivated in dry, arid climates. Some scholars even believe that the pomegranate, NOT the apple, was the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

How do you get the seeds out?

Be careful – pomegranate juice can stain your clothes! The easiest way to “de-seed” a pomegranate is to immerse it whole in a deep bowl of water, score the skin lightly in a few places with a sharp knife, and peel it, breaking the white segments apart so that the seeds fall out, all while holding underwater (this prevents juice from spraying). The seeds will sink and the pith and skin will float. Skim this off the top and then strain the seeds, pat dry on a clean tea towel and enjoy!

What do I do with pomegranates?

Pomegranate seeds can be sprinkled over yogurt or mixed into muffins, breads, and cookies. They add flavor to savory dishes like rice and pork, and can even be used in dips and sauces. Alternatively, you can extract the juice via a juicer or by pressing them through a sieve and use the juice in smoothies, tea, or cocktails. Or, you can combine the juice and seeds with cranberries to add a little zing to the traditional Thanksgiving standby.



Barley & Wild Rice Pilaf with Pomegranate Seeds

This pilaf melds the chewy texture of barley and wild rice with the richness of toasted pine nuts and the sweet-sour crunch of pomegranate seeds. The elegant dish is perfect for entertaining.

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup wild rice, rinsed
- 1/2 cup pearl barley
- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth or vegetable broth
- 1/3 cup pine nuts
- 1 cup pomegranate seeds (1 large fruit)
- 2 teaspoons freshly grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

Preparation

Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring often, until softened. Add wild rice and barley; stir for a few seconds. Add broth and bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until the wild rice and barley are tender and most of the liquid has been absorbed, 45 to 50 minutes.

Meanwhile, toast pine nuts in a small, dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until light golden and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl to cool.

Add pomegranate seeds, lemon zest, parsley and the toasted pine nuts to the pilaf; fluff with a fork. Serve hot.

Recipe courtesy of EatingWell



NOVEMBER ~ NATIONAL ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS MONTH

Alzheimer's Disease and the Med Diet

Your height and eye color may be out of your hands, but you can control what you eat. And now, more than ever, science is proving that there is a direct link to diet and health. The items on your dinner plate make a difference - not only for your waistline, but for your heart and your head.

November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. Today, as many as 5.2 million Americans are living with this devastating disease. While it is important to understand the diagnosis and treatment, why not try to prevent it? Research has found that people who exercise and closely follow a Mediterranean Diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, olive oil, legumes, whole grains and fish, seem less likely to develop cognitive decline.

Below are a few tips to get you started on eating a "brain-healthy" diet:

1. Opt for olive oil over butter and try to bake or grill your foods instead of frying. Avoid foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol.
2. If it has "berry" at the end of it, put it on your plate! Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries - they all have high levels of antioxidants which are shown to protect the brain from free radicals. Other dark skinned fruits and vegetables such as eggplant, beets, broccoli, spinach, grapes and cherries are good sources as well.
3. A small handful of peanuts, walnuts, or sesame seeds a day can go a long way towards fighting off cognitive decline. A study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* suggests that a good intake of vitamin E might help to prevent poor memory in later years.
4. Omega- 3 fatty acids are essential because our body is unable to make them. Try to eat fatty, coldwater fish such as salmon, mackerel, anchovies, and tuna a few times a week. Or, incorporate other foods high in omega- 3 fatty acids, such as walnuts and flaxseed.



Sardine Pate

Here's a recipe that is delicious, and will help keep your mind sharp as a tack! Omega-3 and fiber-rich spread is a perfect topping for crackers or a filling for a sandwich or wrap.

Ingredients

One 15-ounce can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
 1/2 cup walnut halves
 One 3.75-ounce can skinless, boneless sardines, drained
 1/4 cup packed fresh parsley leaves
 4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (juice of 1 lemon)
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
 1 garlic clove
 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
 Freshly ground pepper

Preparation

Combine the beans, walnuts, sardines, parsley, lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, salt, and a few pinches of pepper in the bowl of a food processor; process until smooth and creamy. Season with additional salt and pepper to taste.

* Recipe courtesy of *National Fisheries Institute*



DECEMBER ~ MED DIET AND THE HOLIDAYS

Med Diet for the Holidays

No matter how carefully we plan for the holiday season, there always seems to be a stretch of days that don't have enough hours in them. And on top of that, we're tempted by sweets and rich foods at every turn. In fact, most Americans gain a pound or two between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. Don't let your busy schedule keep you from focusing on and enjoying all the healthy foods that are part of the Mediterranean Diet, and finding ways to include them in holiday meals.

Here are a few tips to help you stay on course:

- ◆ **Eat home-cooked meals as often as you can.** Keep your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer stocked with Med Diet basics so you can come home from a busy day and put an affordable, healthy meal on the table quickly, avoiding last minute trips for groceries or fast food. Stock up on extra-virgin olive oil, canned tuna and sardines, canned tomatoes, frozen vegetables and shrimp, whole grains (including pasta), eggs, hard cheese for grating, Greek yogurt, olives, and nuts, plus an assortment of herbs and spices. Keep apples, celery, and carrots in the refrigerator along with hummus and tzatziki. And don't skip breakfast or lunch!
- ◆ **Be smart about buffet party tables.** Enjoy the feast with your eyes first. Survey the table and think about ways to fill half your plate with vegetables. Once you have served yourself, move away from the table and stay away so you won't be tempted to overeat.
- ◆ **Eat lots of vegetables.** Include a variety of vegetables in your holiday meals, and try new ways of preparing them. Shred winter squash and sweet potatoes in the food processor and sauté them in olive oil and garlic. Roast beets, carrots, potatoes, and onions in the oven. Saute fresh spinach with garlic and add a squeeze of lemon. Create pretty and tasty salads, using different colors of lettuce, watercress, and fresh herbs, and serve them with a simple vinaigrette.
- ◆ **Make healthy substitutions.** Find ways to cut back on saturated fat in all your holiday meals. Substitute Greek yogurt for sour cream in sauces, dips, and desserts; use extra-virgin olive oil instead of butter in vegetable dishes and in baking (see chart to the right); serve seafood as a main course; use hummus instead of mayonnaise when making party sandwiches and hors d'oeuvres; for dessert, serve fresh fruit.
- ◆ **Find alternatives to sweets.** Save sweet treats and desserts for truly special occasions during the season, rather than making them daily fare. Reach for a handful of nuts, an apple or orange, or some homemade trail mix, or make a small amount of popcorn when you need a snack. Going to a party? Take spiced nuts, fruit baskets, assorted olives, fresh veggies with healthy dips, special cheeses, or wine.
- ◆ **Exercise!** Find ways to stay active during this busy time. Go for walks and do errands on foot, make time for yourself to go swimming, stop at the gym, or ride your bike.
- ◆ **Drink water.** Make time for water breaks during the day, and drink water with meals.
- ◆ **After you have a glass of wine at a party, fill your glass with water.** For people who like wine, the Med Diet recommends one glass per day for women, two for men.

Swap Butter for Olive Oil When Baking

Butter	Olive Oil
1 tsp	3/4 tsp
2 tsp	1 1/2 tsp
1 Tbsp	2 1/4 tsp
2 Tbsp	1 1/2 Tbsp
1/4 cup	3 Tbsp
1/3 cup	1/4 cup
1/2 cup	1/4 cup + 1 Tbsp
2/3 cup	1/2 cup
3/4 cup	1/2 cup + 1 Tbsp
1 cup	3/4 cup



DECEMBER ~ MED DIET AND THE HOLIDAYS

Med Diet for the Holidays ~ Recipes

Looking for new recipes for the holidays? Here are two easy (and tasty!) ideas to introduce the Mediterranean Diet into your holiday traditions.

Squash and Apple Puree

This is a delicious way to prepare squash without adding any fat. Make it ahead of time if you wish and reheat it at 350°F for 30 minutes.

Ingredients

3 pounds winter squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1-to 2-inch cubes
2 apples, peeled and quartered
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 to 2 tablespoons finely grated orange zest (optional)
Pinch of ground ginger or cinnamon (optional)

Preparation

Bring 1 inch of water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Put the squash and apples in a steamer basket, cover, and steam until the squash is soft, 15 to 20 minutes. (Or, if you don't have a steamer, cook the squash and apples in the boiling water, keeping an eye on the water level and adding more, if necessary, to prevent burning. Drain well before pureeing.)

Transfer the cooked squash to a bowl and mash together to the consistency you prefer. Season with salt and pepper, and add the grated orange zest and ginger, if you like. Keep warm if serving shortly, or cool, cover, refrigerate, and reheat before serving.

Recipe courtesy of Marian Morash, from The Oldways Table

Cinnamon Pecans

Make a batch of these to serve as an aperitif, or as a gift for a friend. They are crisp, sweet, salty, and absolutely delicious. Store in an airtight container for up to two weeks, or freeze for up to two months. Makes 4 cups.

Ingredients

1/3 cup vanilla sugar
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 large egg white
Pinch of fine sea salt
3 cups pecans
1 cup almonds, coarsely chopped
1/4 cup sesame seeds
1/4 teaspoon fleur de sel

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350° F. In a small bowl, whisk together the sugar and cinnamon. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg white with the sea salt just until the egg white foams. Add the nuts and sesame seeds and stir to coat. Add the cinnamon sugar mixture and toss with the nuts until they are thoroughly coated. Sprinkle with the fleur de sel.

Turn the nuts out onto a jellyroll pan and toast in the center of the oven until they are golden, and smell like heaven, 15 to 20 minutes. (Stay nearby, for the nuts can quickly turn the burn corner.)

Remove the nuts from the oven and let them cool on the pan. They will cool into clumps. To serve, break up the clumps.

Recipe courtesy of Sue Raasch, from Nuts in the Kitchen, by Susan Herrmann Loomis