



# THE MIGHTY MEDITERRANEAN

WRITING Caitlyn Diimig, RD | RECIPES Amy Riolo, RD | PHOTOS Blaine Moats | STYLING Jennifer Peterson

Most nutrition experts will tell you to steer clear of diets, and advice on what to eat seems to change with the wind. But there's one eating pattern that dodges the stigmas and looks better with every new stack of research. Find out why the Mediterranean diet continues to reign supreme.

About half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases—many of which are related to poor diet. What we eat and drink every day *really matters*.

That's why every few years the USDA and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services charge a team of powerhouse nutrition experts to review all the latest research to make smart recommendations on how to improve the American way of eating. The most recent team recommended three dietary patterns.

The Mediterranean diet was one of them—again.

It's no surprise, considering that people who live in countries along the Mediterranean Sea have longer life expectancies—consistently in the top 10 of

the world, while Americans rank 31st.

Researchers and dietitians took notice. Then the scientific evidence piled up: A Mediterranean dietary pattern is beneficial for weight loss, heart health, and reducing the risk for type 2 diabetes.

That's a pretty solid endorsement.

Compared to the typical American diet, the Mediterranean diet includes a lot more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, fish, and seafood. It promotes eating less dairy and red meat and cuts back processed foods to decrease sodium and added-sugar intake.

More good news: You likely won't need a diet overhaul to eat this way. You're probably already doing some of it.

Here's how to sail further into those Mediterranean waters.

## Greek Roasted Fish and Vegetables

It's best to eat two servings of fish each week, but most Americans fall woefully short of that goal. You'll get plenty of heart-healthy omega-3s from this sheet-pan dinner with salmon and vegetables. Roasted potatoes make it a balanced meal. Want a Greek flavor? Season it all with oregano, garlic, and lemon. Feeling Italian? Use fresh parsley, garlic, and low-sodium Italian seasoning. Either way, you'll get bold flavor without relying on salt. **See recipe, p. 100**



## Mediterranean-Style Egg and Tomato Skillet with Pita

In the Mediterranean diet, vegetables come first, and this one-pan meal, also called *shakshuka*, is a great example. Originating on the North African side of the Mediterranean, the dish cradles cooked eggs in a fiery, antioxidant-packed red sauce made with tomatoes and red sweet pepper. The sauce is truly the star. Top it with Greek yogurt, a lean protein, and fresh parsley. Then soak it all up by dipping with whole grain pita bread. This meal is great any time of day. Eat it as a savory breakfast or a satisfying, quick weeknight meal.

**See recipe, p. 101**



### Chicken and Vegetable Souvlaki with Barley Pilaf and Tzatziki

Souvlaki is the Greek cooking method of grilling on a skewer. You'll use less fat to cook, and any excess fat from the meat will drip off into the grill. Pair skewers with high-fiber barley, a North African staple that became popular in other Mediterranean countries. Then dip your dinner into tzatziki—a cucumber-yogurt sauce with a refreshing cool flavor and a tasty way to sneak more veggies into your diet. **See recipe, p. 98**



### Fisherman's Stew with Roasted Garlic Crostini

Abundant access to heart-healthy fish and seafood is just one benefit of living on the Mediterranean coast, and most of its countries embrace a traditional seafood stew. France has *bouillabaisse*. Spain has *zarzuela*. For Italy, it's *zuppa di pesce*. Try swapping our own version for the typical American beef stew in your fall recipe lineup. We've used cod, shrimp, and fresh mussels to make it easier to shop for ingredients in the local supermarket. Tomatoes, garlic, and a little whole wheat Italian bread round out this nutritious meal. **See recipe, p. 100**