



Embrace the International Mediterranean Diet Month



May is the International Mediterranean Diet Month (aka “Med Month”). Why would we have a month-long celebration for a diet? Because this eating style promotes longevity and good health!

What is the Mediterranean diet?

In the 1950s, it was found that Mediterranean countries have a much lower rate of heart disease than other countries. It is in large part due to their dietary patterns that limit sugars, processed foods, and saturated fats but includes foods that are high in fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and heart healthy fats like olive oil. Due to the geographical advantage, the Mediterranean has a lot of food resources which forms their dietary pattern as below:

Food Group	Comments	Examples
Vegetables	Foundation of diet, varied, at least 2-3 cups a day	Asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery
Nuts & Seeds	¼ cup serving most days	Almonds, flaxseeds, walnuts, cashew, macadamias
Dairy	Low-fat products in moderation	Nonfat or 1% fat milk, yogurt, and cheeses
Eggs	Low to moderate amounts	Whole eggs
Fruits	Fresh, whole fruits is a foundation of diet, varied at least 2 servings a day	Berries, apple, pear, papaya, guava, banana, kiwi
Legumes (beans, peas, lentils)	One of the main sources of protein instead of meats. Use often.	Adzuki beans, edamame, chickpeas, pinto beans
Olive oil	The primary source of added fat instead of butter, margarine or animal fats. Use generously.	Olive oil in all types especially extra virgin
Fish & Seafood	Moderate amounts but more often than meats	Salmon, shrimps, cod, anchovy, bass, mussels, sardine
Grains	Preferably whole grains, foundation of the diet and not restricted	Barley, bulgur, oatmeal, quinoa, whole wheat bread
Poultry	Low amounts	Chicken, turkey without skin
Red meat	Occasional	Beef, veal, lamb, pork
Wine	Moderate (1 glass wine per day for women, 2 for men) for those who drink alcohol	Red wine
Sweets, Sugar	Infrequent	Sugar, pastry, desserts

In summary, the Med diet is higher in whole fruits, vegetables, whole grains, olive oil, nuts, and fish, but lower in red meats, dairy, and sweets.

The [American Heart Association](#) recommends the Med diet to lower the chances of heart disease and stroke, as well as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

If this seems challenging to change your diet all at once, start with these tips:

- Snack on a handful of unsalted nuts instead of chips
- Eat fruit for dessert for something naturally sweet
- Replace half of your white rice and white bread with whole-grain/whole wheat products
- Drink nonfat or 1% fat milk instead of whole milk
- Cook with olive oil instead of butter, margarine or bacon grease
- Make a SMOOTHIE that has these healthy nutrients (see next page)

Nutrition facts for Berries and Spinach Smoothie:

Berries:

- contain 10 times more antioxidants than other fruits and vegetables
- 1 cup of berries has 3 g of fiber
- Strawberries are high in vitamin C with 1 cup providing 100% of your daily needs
- May is the early harvesting season for strawberries and blueberries so you can get them at a much lower price

Spinach:

- 1 cup of spinach has only 5 grams of carbohydrate –a “free” food on a low-carb diet
- Spinach is high in vitamins A and K, and is a good source of potassium

Oats:

- Good source of soluble fiber to lower LDL (bad) cholesterol

Nonfat Greek yogurt and 1% fat milk:

- Dairy foods are good sources of protein, calcium, and potassium

Berries & Spinach Smoothie

Adapted from Myplate Very Berry Smoothie

<https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/very-berry-smoothie>

Ingredients

- ½ cup of nonfat Greek yogurt
- 1 cup of mixed frozen berries
- 1 cup of raw spinach
- 2 tbsp. of oats
- 1 cup of 1% fat milk
- Crushed ice, as desired



Directions

- Add all ingredients to a blender and mix until smooth or desired consistency.
- Pour in glass and enjoy!

Nutrition Facts

2 servings per container	
Serving size	2 cup
Calories	197 kcal
Fat	2 g
Saturated Fat	1 g
Total Carbohydrate	26 g
Fiber	3 g
Added sugar	0 g
Protein	20 g
Sodium	140 mg
Potassium	280 mg
Calcium	240 mg 24%
Iron	5 mg 45%