

## *The Mediterranean Lifestyle - The Basics*

Have you dreamed of escaping to the Mediterranean? Visions of olive oil, tomatoes, wine, blue skies, olive groves, vineyards, history, culture, and of course, food?

Well, come with me as we explore the Mediterranean Lifestyle – commonly referred to as the Mediterranean Diet. Together we will explore different aspects of following this acclaimed diet that is good for healthy weight loss, reduces the risk of common diseases such as high cholesterol, heart disease, certain cancers, and diabetes. Other benefits include improved brain health by helping to ward off dementia and depression. AND, the best benefit is the amazing flavors one will enjoy.

According to scientific research, this impossible list is fulfilled by a diet common to an extraordinarily diverse group of countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea including Italy, France, and Spain, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Egypt, and Morocco. This means that there isn't a single "diet" that encompasses the entire Mediterranean region—the [spice-laden dishes](#) of Morocco bear little resemblance to the [lemon and caper-laced](#) cuisine of Italy. Rather, the Mediterranean diet or lifestyle is about what these cuisines have in common: a daily emphasis on vegetables and fruits, beans and lentils, whole grains, more seafood than meat and poultry, and heart-healthy olive oil.

This approach to eating is based in fresh, seasonal dishes that are usually easily prepared with an emphasis on using high quality ingredients and an abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit. Don't be mistaken, this is not a vegetarian diet, but [meat is often used more like a condiment](#), and more than half your plate should be filled with [vegetables](#), [healthy grains](#) and [legumes](#). Indulge in fruit drizzled with honey, or [sweetened yogurt for dessert](#) and consume a healthy fat like [extra virgin olive oil](#).

The very crux of this celebrated lifestyle though, is combining these mindful food choices with other aspects of life including joyful and engaging activity and movement, and most importantly, commemorating the social joy of cooking and eating together. After all, meals in the Mediterranean are a focal point of the day -- communal, enjoyed with friends and family, loud, animated, filled with conversation and merriment.

So BE BRAVE and join me as I intersperse monthly articles with my recipes. The articles will hopefully help you to identify ways you can live the Mediterranean Lifestyle and how to Eat, Drink and be Mindful –the essence of this lifestyle that has been proven successful over centuries.

*Chef Veera*

All the highlighted items will lead you to a recipe that epitomizes this approach to the Mediterranean Diet.

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