

The Mediterranean Diet Going Global!

Long deemed one of the healthiest approaches to eating and a lifestyle recommended by many physicians, to protect against chronic conditions, the Mediterranean Diet has consistently been named one of the best diets to follow for brain health, heart health, nutritious eating patterns and all-around healthy lifestyle.

Basic principles among others, include the consumption of heart healthy Extra Virgin Olive Oil, ensuring that half your plate is filled with delicious vegetables, replacing red meats with plant-based proteins or seafood, and cooking and sharing meals together.

When we think of foods from the Mediterranean, we often think of Greek salads, lots of olives, Italian pastas, Spanish paellas or tapas. But there are so many other countries with a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea spanning three continents including Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa, each with their own cuisines and food traditions.

The eastern Mediterranean with countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Cyprus, Syria and more, feature cuisines laden with parsley, sumac, mint, za'tar, labneh, hummus, fresh cheeses like feta, along with grains like bulger, pita breads, lavash. All these create new and exciting flavors to experiment with.

The North African region made up of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt have cuisines rich in spices very familiar to me like cumin, coriander, cinnamon, cloves and saffron. Here dried fruits, which are a great source of fiber are used in both savory dishes and sweets.

These cuisines utilize a myriad of different spices, flavors profiles, and types of ingredients, but all follow the same healthy principles.

So, while the science backed principles are the same, let's go global and talk about personalizing the principles of this diet to YOU.

Growing up in India, I loved going to the local market which was much like our farmers markets lined with colorful fruits and vegetables – smelling the fresh ripeness of mangos, or the plump tomatoes and bargaining for the best price on crisp cauliflower! Or picking out a different variety of dried lentils or beans to cook into a delicious and aromatic dish. I love following the Mediterranean Diet, but don't want to give up the warming spices and spicy flavors of my childhood. So, I follow all the core tenets, but make [Indian inspired dishes](#)

Similarly, I absolutely love the [flavors of Thai food](#), so I have found ways to use lots of Extra Virgin Olive Oil with plant forward recipes that incorporate all those delicious flavors, while still following the principles of healthy eating prevalent in the Mediterranean Diet.

So, BE BRAVE and modify your favorite ethnic recipes to incorporate healthy fats; increased vegetables; more herbs and spices instead of salt, whole grains, nuts and seeds and eat globally while enjoying the benefits of the Mediterranean Diet. And/or simply peruse the recipes on this site. Either way, your all-around health will love you for it!

Chef Veera