

EAT LIKE A

MEDITERRANEAN

If you can't sneak away for an extended visit to the Mediterranean, you might consider at least eating like you live there. Studies have shown that sticking to Mediterranean eating patterns—lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and olive oil and little red meat—offers a wealth of benefits, from keeping weight in check to managing blood glucose levels. Many principles of the Mediterranean diet are consistent with the 2015 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Dietary Guidelines recommend that Americans increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and seafood.

Here are 12 simple ways to eat like a Mediterranean:

1 Use olive or canola oil on salads and while cooking.



2 Snack on nuts, seeds or fruit.

3 Include a generous leafy green salad with most dinners.



4 Help yourself to whole-grain bread, pasta, rice and other grains.

5 Fix at least a couple of vegetarian meals every week.



6 Add a dish or two that contain legumes (beans and lentils) to your weekly menu.



7 Have fish (not breaded and deep-fried) at least twice a week.



8 If you eat meat, favor poultry.

9 Eat red meat only occasionally, and be aware of portion size.

10 If you drink, have no more than a glass or two with a meal.

11 Enjoy fruit for dessert.



12 Set aside enough time to savor every bite.

Live like a Mediterranean for better health: Studies suggest that the Mediterranean way of life—not much alcohol, no smoking, plenty of exercise and maintaining a healthy weight—may have just as much to do with these Mediterranean-dwellers' health as what they eat.

Facts Up Front helps busy shoppers by summarizing important nutrition information in a clear, simple and easy-to-use format on the front of food and beverage packages. In this voluntary labeling program, the facts are straight from the FDA-regulated Nutrition Facts panel on the side or back of food packages.

Four Mediterranean Foods to Try:

Eggplant: A staple of many Mediterranean dishes, eggplant absorbs the flavors of the region (olive oil, garlic and fresh herbs) and offers a richness that often stands in for meat in recipes. One cup of cooked eggplant is a good source of fiber.

Tomatoes: Tomatoes are packed with vitamin C (½ cup chopped provides 20 percent of the daily value) and lycopene, an antioxidant that may help prevent some cancers. Bonus points for versatility: you can find them fresh, canned, in paste form or in juice.

Broccoli Rabe: Just 3 ounces of cooked broccoli rabe provides vitamin C, potassium, calcium and fiber. Try pairing it with bold ingredients like sausage, anchovy and hot pepper.

Healthy Oils: Heart-healthy olive oil is a good choice for cooking and using in homemade salad dressings.