

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

This Pyramid, which represents the optimal, traditional Mediterranean diet, is based on the dietary traditions of Crete and southern Italy in the 1960s. It is structured in the light of nutrition research carried out in 1993 and presented by Professor Walter Willet during the 1993 International Conference on the Diets of the Mediterranean, held in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid underlines the importance of the foods making up the principal food groups. Each of these individual food groups offers some, but not all, of the nutrients one needs. Food from one group cannot replace that of another group. All the groups are necessary for a healthy diet. The basic products of the Mediterranean diet, in descending order of quantity and frequency advised, are:

Grains: These form the base of the majority of meals in Mediterranean countries - bread (wholemeal or otherwise), pasta, couscous and rice.

Fruit and vegetables: Meals are more flavoursome when in-season products are selected and they are cooked very simply. In most Mediterranean countries the dessert is generally fruit.

Legumes and nuts: A wide variety of legumes and nuts, such as chickpeas, lentils, haricot beans, pine kernels, almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, etc. are used in cooking. Olive oil and olives: "Olive oil" and "Virgin olive oil" are used throughout the Mediterranean. The former is normally used for cooking. The latter, which is appropriate for all uses, is excellent when consumed raw to best appreciate its aroma and flavour and to benefit fully from all its natural components. The proportion of fats in the traditional diet of Crete observed by Professor Ancel Keys, was >40% were saturated fats, 3 monounsaturated (olive oil).

Dairy products: Cheese, yoghurt and other dairy products, with no special mention of milk.

Fish: offered as a first class protein, before eggs and poultry.

The highest point of the Pyramid, meaning that its consumption is least advised, is occupied by red meat and just slightly below, but also of little importance, are sweets and pastries.

Regular physical activity is vital to maintaining good health and optimal weight. Wine can be consumed in moderation, primarily with meals (1-2 glasses/day). It is optional and should be avoided whenever it puts the individuals or others at risk.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

Sylvia Sideris is a food enthusiast and the author of many articles about healthy food and recipes. For more information and recipes please visit: www.recipesonweb.com