

November 13, 2020

Our health care providers at the clinic have been making more referrals for diet counseling on the Mediterranean (Med) Diet, and for good reason. Study after study supports the Mediterranean diet's heart benefits, improvements in overall health and following it may also reduce your risk of Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. Best of all, it is a delicious meal plan! Embracing the Mediterranean Diet is all about making some simple but profound changes in the way you eat today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life.

We live in northern Michigan and the LTBB of Odawas Indians have a rich heritage of traditional foods that fit well into a Mediterranean Diet lifestyle. Let's see how we can make the Mediterranean Diet LTBB style:

1. **Eat lots of vegetables.** From a simple plate of sliced fresh tomatoes drizzled with olive oil and crumbled feta cheese to stunning salads, garlicky greens, fragrant soups and stews, healthy pizzas, or oven-roasted root vegetable mixtures, vegetables are vitally important to the fresh tastes and delicious flavors of the Med Diet.

Enjoy vegetables in season – cabbages, winter squashes, beets, carrots, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, turnips, kohlrabi, and mushrooms are all fresh and great prices at this time of year. November is the time of the Frozen Moon when your ancestors ate the foods that were stored from the spring, summer and fall harvests; it is the time for us to eat the vegetables we picked, preserved or stored from our gardens, or that we gathered from the Home Grown project. Enjoy the canned or frozen green beans, corn, tomatoes, pickles, shredded zucchini and more, and remember the warmth and sunshine of summer.

If you did not preserve or store your own vegetables, the grocery store is a great place to pick up frozen, canned or fresh vegetables – they all fit into a healthy meal plan.

2. **Change the way you think about meat.** If you eat meat, try having smaller amounts – enjoy small strips of sirloin in a vegetable stir-fry, or a dish of pasta garnished with diced ham or turkey pepperoni, or a tasty bowl of wild rice chicken vegetable soup.

Try a lovely warm bowl of bean soup flavored with a small amount of meat, or stuff a winter squash with a mixture of wild rice, venison, onion, mushrooms and some toasted walnuts or pecans.

3. **Enjoy some dairy products.** Eat or cook with Greek or plain yogurt, or plain kefir, and try smaller amounts of a variety of cheeses. If you are lactose intolerant, yogurt and kefir are naturally lactose-free but loaded with live healthy bacteria known as probiotics. Hard cheese like Parmesan is low in lactose and a small amount packs a lot of flavor.

One way to enjoy that plain yogurt or kefir is with some frozen blueberries, a drizzle of maple syrup and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

4. **Eat fish or seafood twice a week.** Fish such as whitefish, lake trout, tuna, herring, salmon, and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, and shellfish including mussels, oysters, and clams have similar benefits for brain and heart health.

Share your favorite fish recipe with your friends and family members. Recipes and the stories that travel with each recipe are a way to keep traditions and teachings about food alive.

5. **Cook a vegetarian meal one night a week.** Build meals around beans, whole grains, and vegetables, and heighten the flavor with fragrant herbs and spices. Down the road, think about trying two meatless meals per week.

Even if you don't want to try a Meatless Monday kind of recipe, you can add more beans to your cooking. Open a can of beans, rinse and drain them and add them to a casserole or soup. Add extra beans, or three different beans to your favorite chili recipe. Beans are also tasty tossed on a salad.

6. **Use healthy fats.** Include sources of healthy fats in daily meals, especially extra-virgin olive oil, sunflower oil, nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, olives, and avocados.

Sprinkle nuts on salads and casseroles for crunch instead of using croutons.

7. **Switch to whole grains.** Whole grains are naturally rich in many important nutrients; their fuller, nuttier taste and extra fiber keep you satisfied for hours. Cook favorite grains like oatmeal, barley, quinoa, dried corn or whole grain cornmeal, wild or brown rice more often and choose whole grain breads and cereals when at the grocery store.

Enjoy your favorite corn soup recipe and try someone else's just for fun.

8. **For dessert, eat fruit.** Choose from a wide range of delicious fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits - pears, apples, cherries, berries, grapes and more all are grown right here in Michigan.

Step outside the state and enjoy oranges, pineapple, and maybe a pomegranate. https://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/how_to_cut_and_de_seed_a_pomegranate/

Instead of daily ice cream or cookies, save sweets loaded with added sugar for a special treat or celebration.

That's our "talk" for the day! I have attached some additional materials for your further exploration of a Mediterranean style diet.

Have a great month! Charla

Source: <https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>