The Mediterranean Diet
A Delicious Approach to Heart Health and Weight Control

You might have heard about the Mediterranean diet before. It was developed centuries ago in countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, such as Italy, Spain, and Greece. It is now famous for being one of the most beneficial diets for heart health. But besides this, it combines a vast number of rich, delicious foods and cooking methods that make anyone want to follow it. Olive oil, nuts, fruits and pasta are just some of its many components. Here, we describe it in more detail, and explain to you why it might be one of the best recipes for weight control and heart health. Let us indulge you in this tasty and ancient tradition:

1. Healthy Oils…that your eyes can see: Choosing olive or canola oil over butter or margarine is beneficial because these oils can lower your “bad” (LDL) cholesterol levels. Mediterraneans make these oils visible in their meals, by adding them to salads, for example. This keeps them conscious of how much fat they are eating, as it is easy to overeat fats when they are hidden in foods like pastries. Choose olive or canola oils over any other fat for a healthy heart.

2. Fatty fish as your main meat source: Mediterraneans eat high sources of omega 3’s like tuna, mackerel, salmon, sardines, and herring at least 2 times a week. Omega 3’s not only keep arteries healthy. Some studies have shown that people with high levels of omega 3s survive more to heart attacks than people with low levels! Eating fish also replaces sources of saturated fats like red meat, which increase LDL in the blood.

3. Vegetables with most meals: Cook them, eat them raw, make a salad, add them to sandwiches, make a vegetable sauce or soup. These are all things Mediterraneans do...EVERY DAY. Don’t forget to add some olive oil and pepper to your vegetables - fat helps your body absorb some vitamins better, like heart-healthy Vitamin E. Plus, you won’t believe the amazing taste you get! Vegetables are very high in vitamins, minerals and fiber that keep you fuller longer, lower cholesterol levels, and maintain healthy arteries.

4. Yes, you can have dessert: Mediterraneans have dessert almost every day. But their dessert is usually a seasonal fruit or fat free yogurt. This gives the sweet taste we crave after a salty meal, but with significantly less calories and fat than cake or ice cream. Yogurt also has calcium and vitamin D for healthy bones, and fruits add an extra boost of vitamins and fiber.

5. Go nuts! Almonds, walnuts and peanuts. They add flavor and crunchiness to meals. Just like olive or canola oil, they have monounsaturated fats that lower LDL cholesterol and reduce inflammation. Eat them as a snack, add them to salads, or coat your fish with them for an extra crunch to your meal.
6. **Water is the drink of choice:** As much as we here about wine, water is the main drink recommended by the Mediterranean pyramid. Around 6 glasses of water a day is recommended. Concentrate on doing this, and you will surely drink much less soda, juices, and other sugary drinks that add calories to your diet.

7. **Physical Activity over exercise:** Did you notice Physical Activity makes up the biggest part of the Mediterranean Pyramid? Notice, however, that physical activity does not mean you HAVE to go to a gym. Mediterraneans are famous for their high amounts of walking, and for choosing this over car rides. Park further away from your car, take the stairs over the elevator, or walk to close destinations. These are the simple choices that make Mediterraneans some of the healthiest people in the world!