Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service


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## Tasty Mediterranean Diet Benefits Health

The Mediterranean diet is well-known as a healthy eating plan. It emphasizes eating whole grains, vegetables, fruits, cooked dry beans and peas, nuts, fish, low-fat dairy products and olive oil, with low to moderate amounts of other foods. A recent study found that those who ate a Mediterranean diet had 30\% fewer heart attacks and strokes than those who ate a diet that was reduced in
 fat.

This issue of Dining on a Dime describes some of the healthful dietary habits confirmed by this study and recommended by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines 2010. You can easily adopt them, even on a tight budget. Be sure to check page 4 for the quick recipe for "Mediterranean Tuna Macaroni Medley."

Eat a diet high in plant foods. Adults are encouraged to eat at least 4 ounces of whole grains, and at least 4 cups of vegetables and unsweetened fruits, every day. Try to fill half of your plate or bowl with fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack. Also, strive to eat 2 to 3 cups of cooked dry beans each week.

Go nuts. Eat 4 to 6 ounces of unsalted nuts and seeds each week. People in the study who ate this amount of nuts lowered their risk of heart disease significantly. You could eat nuts as a snack, or chop and sprinkle them on oatmeal, salads or yogurt. Also look for peanut butter that has peanuts as the only ingredient.

Eat more oil instead of solid fats. Olive oil is used daily by people following a Mediterranean diet. It is high in mono-unsaturated fats, which help lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. Canola oil is also high in monounsaturated fats. Instead of just adding oils to your daily diet, use them instead of foods high in saturated and trans fats. You can use oil instead of solid fats when cooking. You can also mix oil with vinegar or lemon juice for use as a salad dressing. Let refrigerated oil come to room temperature before use.

Limit beverages and foods high in added sugars. Drink few sweetened beverages and eat only a couple of desserts each week.

Eat at a table. Each day, eat at least two meals that last 20 or more minutes at a dining table. Slow down for higher enjoyment of your meals ... and your health!

## Money-Minded Mediterranean Meals



Is a Mediterranean diet an expensive way to eat? No, not with smart shopping and following some of the suggestions described on the previous page and below! A Mediterranean diet can be both healthful AND low in cost. You'll likely save over the long run by lowering your medical expenses if you eat this way, too. Read on for tips to keep sense of your food cents!

Seldom eat out. It's much less costly to prepare meals at home. In addition, fixing meals at home makes it easier to get the foods that are emphasized in a Mediterranean diet, including whole grains, vegetables, fruits, cooked dry beans and peas, nuts, fish, low-fat dairy and olive or canola oil.

Omit most bottled beverages and processed foods. People living in the U.S. spend hundreds of dollars each year on convenience foods. Decide how you could cut back. Stop buying sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, and bottled teas and water? Skip the snacks and desserts aisles? Reduce purchases of prepared foods, such as pizzas, frozen meals, boxed dishes and canned soups? Limit sugared cereals? These are all ways to improve your health AND reduce your food costs. Instead of convenience foods, buy basic ingredients to use when preparing meals.

Buy direct. For cost savings, find local farmer(s) to buy fresh fruits and vegetables from, such as at a farmers market. Or buy in bulk from a discount store, if the price is right for the foods you want (such as oats, dry beans or cooking oil).

Serve canned fish. Eat at least 8 ounces (cooked) of fish each week. Especially choose fatty fish for their healthful omega 3 fats, such as canned tuna, mackerel and salmon. Canned fish is convenient and easy to cook with. However, it often has a high sodium content. (The same is true for most canned vegetables.)

Serve meat and poultry in mixed dishes. Make most of your meals focused on plant foods (whole grains, vegetables and unsweetened fruits). One way to do this is to combine some meat or poultry with larger amounts of vegetables and whole grains, such as in a salad, stir-fry, casserole, pasta dish or stew. Use very budget-friendly cooked dry beans and peas often each week as a healthful protein food substitute. Each week, eat up to 12 cooked ounces of red meats (such as beef and pork) and up to 11 cooked ounces of poultry (such as skinless chicken and turkey).

Chill. Plain frozen vegetables, fruits, fish and meats can be very economical. Frozen vegetables and fruits are picked at their peak of ripeness. Another advantage is that typically there is little spoilage waste with frozen foods.
Sources (Accessed 4/10/13): 1. Primary prevention of cardiovascular disease with a Mediterranean diet, N Engl J Med 2013;368:1279-90. 2. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010, www.dietaryguidelines.gov You may view previous newsletters at www.ksre.ksu.edu/HumanNutrition/p.aspx?tabid=184 Contents of this publication may be reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit Erin Henry and Mary Meck Higgins, "Dining on a Dime," May 2013.

## Page 3

## Fill your Shopping Cart with Groceries ... Not Germs

Are you filling your shopping cart with germs as well as groceries? Probably you are, but you don't have to! Here are some ways that you can protect yourself and your family from the germs that may lurk in your grocery store.

The shopping cart. The handle of your shopping cart can contain more bacteria, and even fecal matter, than an average public restroom. Plus, touching the handle after someone who might be carrying an infection is an easy way to transfer germs. What to do? Most grocery stores offer sanitary wipes so that you can wipe down the shopping cart handle. If your store doesn't, bring your own. Or, at least, be sure to wash your hands after touching a cart.

The conveyor belt. That rotating checkout line conveyor belt can be a source of both dirt and germs. What to do? To protect your foods against soiled and bacterialaden grocery store conveyor belts, never place fresh fruits or veggies directly on the conveyer belt. Instead, give them a ride only after you have wrapped them in a clean bag.

Reusable shopping bags. Researchers from Arizona and California tested 84 reusable bags and found high levels of bacteria in all of them. What to do? If you're being eco-friendly by avoiding disposable bags and using cloth ones, be sure to wash them (by hand or in a washing machine) between uses. This will prevent your reusable bags from becoming a breeding ground for food-borne bacteria. By laundering your reusable bags, you will kill $99.9 \%$ of the bacteria on them. Be both green and clean! (Source, accessed 4/10/13: Assessment of the potential for cross contamination of food products by reusable shopping bags, Univ. of AZ Dept. of Soil, Water \& Environmental Science and Loma Linda Univ. School of Public Health, www.llu.edu/public-health/news/news-grocery-bags-bacteria.page)

Produce misters. Many grocery stores use misters to spray their fresh produce on display so that it doesn't dry out. However, the water in the misters - and the moist environment they create - can become a breeding ground for germs. This is one more reason to protect your family from illness by keeping your produce as safe as possible. What to do? Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running water before eating them. Rub those with a firm skin or a hard rind briskly with your hands or a produce brush to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Before serving fresh leafy vegetables that have not been pre-washed and bagged, separate and individually rinse the leaves. Discard the outermost ones, such as on a head of lettuce or cabbage. Leaves can be difficult to clean, so put them in a clean bowl and soak them in cool water for a few minutes to loosen sand and dirt. (A clean bowl is better than the sink, which can be full of bacteria.) After rinsing, blot the leaves dry with paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a
 better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.

## Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner Mediterranean Tuna Macaroni Medley (Makes 3 servings) Ingredients

1/2 cup whole grain macaroni 5 ounces chunk light tuna, canned in oil, not drained 2 tablespoons lemon juice 1 teaspoon dried oregano or Italian seasoning 1 teaspoon minced garlic 1 teaspoon mustard

## Directions

1. Cook, then drain, macaroni. Set aside. 2. Meanwhile, drain oil from tuna into a small bowl. Mix oil, lemon juice, oregano, garlic and mustard. Stir dressing well. Set aside. 3. In a large bowl, stir together tuna, chickpeas, cabbage, cucumber and macaroni. 4. Stir in yogurt and dressing. 5. If desired, garnish with chopped tomato, black olives and crumbled feta cheese. 6. Serve. 7. Cover and refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Nutrition Facts per 1/3 recipe, about $1 \mathbf{1 / 2}$ cups, without garnish: 260 calories, 7 g fat, 1.5 g saturated fat, 0 g trans fat, 31 g carbohydrates, 21 g protein, 30 mg cholesterol, 430 mg sodium and 7 g dietary fiber. Daily Values: $4 \%$ vitamin A, $50 \%$ vitamin C, $10 \%$ calcium, $15 \%$ iron.

3/4 cup canned, rinsed, drained chickpeas
3 cups finely shredded cabbage or slaw mix
$1 / 2$ cup finely chopped cucumber
1/4 cup plain non-fat yogurt


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