



THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET GUIDE

Your guide to living life the Mediterranean way and
transitioning to a truly healthy lifestyle



about me

Hi, I'm Erin, author of the food blog, The Almond Eater. I wanted to put together a guide to help explain what the Mediterranean Diet is, the "cans" and "can'ts" of the diet, and why I decided to transition into this way of eating, along with some of my favorite recipes and a weekly meal plan.

See, I spent my whole life preaching that no diet is the best diet, and while I still believe that, I've come to learn that when health issues arise, certain diets may be better than others.

After suffering from chronic migraines for over a year and trying everything under the sun to fix them -- various medications, chiropractic care and acupuncture, to name a few--I finally decided to stop eating chocolate and most alcohol once and for all. This was NOT easy for me--I used to eat chocolate daily--but I did it, and guess what? I feel SO much better, and not eating chocolate has been easier than I ever thought possible.

Along with migraines, I've also had joint pain for the past several years.

Both my mom and my grandma have arthritis, so I always assumed that I'd be lucky enough (sarcasm) to have it someday as well. Unfortunately, my pain went from being occasional to pretty frequent within a year. Similarly to my migraines, I knew I could either go the trial and error route with medicine, or attempt to take matters into my own hands by adjusting my diet.

I started researching ways to minimize joint pain, and I stumbled upon the Mediterranean Diet. Like any other person these days, I immediately Googled anything and everything I could about it, and was VERY intrigued.

Don't hate me for saying this (ok you can hate me a little bit), but the Mediterranean Diet isn't a diet at all, it's a lifestyle. I know, I know, but please stick with me here. I wouldn't have written this book if I wasn't obsessed with this way of eating. I can sit here and say that, since starting this diet a few months ago, my joint pain is less frequent and I'm filling my body with more nutrients than ever before.

If you've been following The Almond Eater for awhile, you'll know that I post several vegan, paleo and whole30 recipes, because I enjoy making recipes healthier if and when possible. However, I never truly identified with any of those labels. Again, I don't think people need food labels in order to be healthy, but I've recently found that having some sort of guide--following the Mediterranean Diet--has forced me to eat more fruits and vegetables than I normally would. Ok so what's the diet all about anyway? Let's talk about it!

What is the Mediterranean diet?

The Mediterranean Diet is a diet inspired by the eating habits of Greece, Italy and Spain in the 1940s and 1950s. Nowadays, many people who live in those countries tend to eat a little more... American. Think: fried food and a lot of sugar. But back in the day, the Mediterranean Diet was something to aspire to. In fact, U.S. News & World Report called the Mediterranean Diet the best overall diet in 2019. The diet primarily focuses on eating plenty of fruits, vegetables,

whole grains, and healthy fats, including seafood, olive oil and avocados.

The Mediterranean Diet focuses on shifting your mindset around food. Again, although the word "diet" is in the title, it's much more of a lifestyle. The goal is to get you to view food as fuel--food that benefits your mind, body and overall health--rather than just eating food because it tastes good.

With that said, food included in the Mediterranean Diet DOES taste good. Since this way of eating isn't a structured eating plan, you'll have the flexibility to incorporate tons of good-for-you foods into your life as you please.



Why try the Mediterranean diet?



HEALTH BENEFITS

The diet claims to have many health benefits, including but not limited to:

- reduce bad cholesterol
- decreased risk of Alzheimer's
- reduced risk for heart disease
- strengthens bones
- helps control blood sugar
- helps fight depression
- protects against type 2 diabetes
- helps with weight loss
- improve rheumatoid arthritis

- can help prevent cancer
- provides plenty of fiber, which helps with digestion and to ward off hunger

+more

Are you convinced yet?! On the next page, I'm going to discuss what you can and what you can't eat while on this diet, so keep reading!

So, what's it all about? The Mediterranean Diet can be broken down into three categories: 1) foods to eat frequently 2) foods to eat sometimes and 3) foods to eat on special occasions.

FOODS TO EAT FREQUENTLY

The diet focuses on eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Here's a quick list of things to eat on a regular basis:

- ANY and all vegetables
- ANY and all fruit
- whole grain pasta and bread
- whole grains in general (brown rice, quinoa, barley, farro)
- nuts
- seeds
- healthy fats (olive oil, avocado oil)
- legumes (chickpeas, beans, lentils)
- seafood (salmon, tuna, shrimp at least 2x/week)
- herbs and spices
- tea and coffee (unsweetened)
- PLENTY of water

FOODS TO EAT SOMETIMES

What does sometimes mean? Sometimes means no more than 2x/week.

- eggs
- poultry
- cheese (feta, brie, halloumi, parmesan, ricotta)
- yogurt and kefir
- wine (technically, 1 glass of red wine per day is ok)

FOODS TO EAT RARELY/ ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

The cool thing about this diet is that even the "off-limits" foods are not completely off-limits. Feel free to enjoy these foods on special occasions, but they should be avoided on a regular basis.

- red meat
- processed meats (sausage, hot dogs)
- refined sugar
- refined grains (regular pasta, white bread)
- refined oils (canola oil)
- highly processed foods, including fast food and fried foods
- alcohol

Why I Like This Diet + My Experience



You might be wondering why, if I hate diets so much, I decided to take on this particular diet? To be honest, out of all the diets I came across, the Mediterranean Diet seems like the easiest one to stick with, probably because it's not overly restrictive. Again, it's a lifestyle, not a diet.

The problem with a lot of diets is that they're temporary--yes, you might lose weight/feel better at first, but as soon as you stop you go back to feeling the way you did before. But not with the Mediterranean Diet.

You may have heard the saying "the

more sugar you eat, the more sugar you crave." Well, as it turns out, the less sugar you eat, the less sugar you crave. Makes sense, right?

The same goes with fruits and vegetables--the more you eat them, the more your body naturally craves them. I mean, I ate a giant plate of roasted carrots with pesto the other day. WHO HAVE I BECOME?! Between you and me, I love it. I genuinely feel like I'm making good choices for my body and my health.

Here's the thing: if you would've asked me before I started this diet if I

ate healthy, I would've said yes. But now I really feel like I'm eating more whole foods than ever before. I also know the word "healthy" looks different for everyone.

You don't have to have a ton of health issues before implementing a better way to eating. You can start today!

HOW I'M FEELING

Honestly? I feel more energized than ever. Again, I didn't think that I wasn't energized before, but now I feel really energized in the best way.

Mentally, I like it because technically speaking, nothing is completely off-limits. Yes, there are foods to avoid regularly, but if you go to your parents house and they're grilling burgers, you can eat the burger without stressing! The thing I dislike about traditional diets is that foods are labeled "good" and "bad", and to me, this diet feels much more fluid, which I appreciate and I think makes it easier to stick with.

So yeah, I'm feeling good. I feel like I'm making positive food choices that will impact me for the better in the long run. I was talking to my husband about how I put on preventative

face creams every night (i.e. anti-wrinkle cream), and now I finally feel like I'm approaching food the same way.

BUT WHAT ABOUT GLUTEN?

There are studies that show that whole grains--including whole wheat bread--provide fiber which ultimately benefits you health-wise. There are also studies that show that gluten of any kind causes inflammation.

Currently, I'm still eating some gluten, but being mindful of my consumption. It's going to be up to YOU as to whether or not you feel good eating it. ...meaning you're going to have to listen to your body. If you're just starting out with eating the Mediterranean way, I'd recommend keeping gluten in your diet to start, then if it feels right, you can try cutting it out to see if you feel better. Cutting out too many things at once--meat, sugar and gluten--may cause some people to "fall off the wagon" with the diet.

*I'm NOT a doctor--please consult your doctor for any tests/questions you may have.

Now, let's talk about the food!

Here's what a typical day of eating used to look like for me:

Breakfast: 2 eggs, 1 piece of toast

Snack: granola bar/energy bar

Lunch: roasted sweet potato

Snack: popcorn/grapes

Dinner: meat, carb, vegetable

Snack: popcorn/dates

Here's what a typical day of eating looks like for me now:

Breakfast: smoothie OR 2 eggs with a side of fruit

Snack: honestly, I'm not usually hungry in between breakfast and lunch, but if I am I'll have a handful of nuts

Lunch: roasted vegetables/salad topped with avocado, tomatoes, sweet potato

Snack: smoothie or roasted chickpeas

Dinner: carb/vegetable/maybe seafood

Snack: strawberries or grapes, though I'm usually not hungry after dinner

I'll admit, they're not vastly different, but I am without a doubt eating more fruits and vegetables. I'm being more mindful with my snacking, too. Instead of reaching for whatever is in my pantry, I look to see if there's a combination of nuts I can eat (i.e.

homemade trail mix) or if I can roast some vegetables.

Depending on how you currently eat, this diet will either be really easy to implement, or fairly challenging. Overall, I'd say it was an easy switch for me, though not eating meat every day has been an adjustment (a welcome one!).

MEAL PREPPING

It should come as no surprise that in order to eat more vegetables, you have to have plenty of vegetables on hand. Otherwise, you'll resort to eating chips/pretzels/popcorn every afternoon instead of nuts, seeds and/or fruit and vegetables.

I was never a meal-prepper before, but you better believe I am now! You'll find some of my favorite recipes to prep in the back of this book, but I try to spend 2-3 hours every Sunday making good-for-you foods like roasted carrots, roasted chickpeas, sliced strawberries, granola, chia pudding, soup during the colder months, homemade trail mix--stuff like that.

If you work in an office, you may want to prep some things to take in your lunches, too.

shopping list

if you have healthy food on hand, you'll be more likely to eat healthy food

VEGETABLES

- leafy greens: spinach, kale, collard greens, romaine
- other greens: broccoli, brussels sprouts, asparagus, zucchini, green beans
- cauliflower, potatoes, any kind of squash, radishes, carrots, mushrooms, avocado, olives, eggplant, artichoke
- onions, garlic

FRUITS

- berries: strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries
- bananas, grapes
- apples, pears, oranges
- pineapple, watermelon, stone fruit

NUTS+SEEDS

- nuts: almonds, walnuts, cashews, pecans, brazil nuts, pistachios
- seeds: sunflower, pumpkin, sesame
- nut butter: almond, cashew, tahini (only ingredient should be the nut, nothing else)

LEGUMES

- chickpeas, beans, lentils

WHOLE GRAINS

- whole grain bread, whole grain pasta
- brown rice, quinoa, barley, oats, couscous, farro

HEALTHY FATS/CONDIMENTS

- olives
- extra virgin olive oil, avocado oil
- balsamic vinegar, pesto, tomato sauce (without sugar)

SEAFOOD/PROTEIN

- seafood: salmon, tuna, shrimp, sardines, herring
- soy-based protein: tofu, tempeh, seitan

OTHER (SOMETIMES) BUY:

- eggs, chicken
- cheese
- yogurt
- honey

go-to mediterranean diet recipes



BREAKFAST

[Cinnamon Raisin Granola](#)

[Coconut Chia Pudding](#)

[Strawberry Banana Overnight Oats](#)

Greek Yogurt with berries

[Quinoa Breakfast Bowl](#)

[Cauliflower Breakfast Bowl](#)

[Superfood Avocado Toast](#)

[Soft Boiled Egg Salad](#)

[Roasted Cauliflower Crustless Quiche](#)

[Egg and Chickpea Breakfast Skillet](#)

[Zucchini Noodle Breakfast Bowl](#)

[Butternut Squash Hash](#)

[Cottage Cheese Breakfast Bowl](#)

[Cinnamon Blueberry Rice Pudding](#) –
made with brown rice and without
sugar

LUNCH

[Simple Greek Salad](#)

[Baked Zucchini Fritters](#)

[Whole30 Chicken Salad](#)

[Chimichurri Potato Salad](#)

[Mediterranean Quinoa Bowl](#)

[Arugula Sun-Dried Tomato Salad](#)

[Garlic Broccoli Steak](#)

[Grilled Corn Kale Salad](#)

[Cauliflower Soup with Tempeh](#)

[Garlic Salmon Salad](#)

[Butternut Squash Chili](#)

[Chipotle Salmon Kale Salad](#)

[Vegan Tomato Soup](#)

[Mediterranean Pasta Salad](#)

[Cucumbers with Quinoa and Feta](#)

[Date and Parmesan Kale Salad](#)

[Kale Taco Salad](#)

DINNER

[Seared Salmon with Chipotle Salsa](#)

[Mediterranean Hummus Bowl](#)

[Lamb Burgers with Feta](#)

[Carrot Top Pesto Flatbread](#)

[Roasted Red Pepper Pasta](#)

[Mediterranean Stuffed Zucchini Boats](#)

[Quinoa Crusted Salmon](#)

[Broccoli Rice Stir Fry with chickpeas](#)

[Mediterranean Quinoa Stuffed Peppers](#)

[Fresh Tomato Spaghetti Squash](#)

[Sesame Tofu Quinoa Bowl](#)

[Roasted Carrots with Yogurt+Farro](#)

[Caramelized Onion Parmesan Quinoa](#)

[Sun-Dried Tomato Rice Bowl](#)

[Caramelized Onion Spaghetti Squash](#)

[Kale Pesto Zoodles](#)

[Mediterranean Lamb Bowl](#)

[Tofu Broccoli Stir Fry](#)

SIDES

[Roasted Carrots with Tarragon Pesto](#)

[Feta Harissa Roasted Carrots](#)

[Pesto Smashed Potatoes](#)

[Cilantro Tahini Sweet Potatoes](#)

[Kung Pao Cauliflower](#)

[Cilantro Lime Brown Rice](#)

[Garlic Broccoli Steak](#)

[Skillet Roasted Potatoes](#)

[Honey Roasted Tomatoes](#)

DRINKS

[Strawberry Blueberry Smoothie](#)

[Iced Golden Milk Turmeric Latte](#)

[Blueberry Kiwi Smoothie](#)

[Cinnamon Roll Protein Smoothie](#)

Red wine

[Spiced Pear Sangria](#)

SNACKS

[Classic Hummus Recipe](#)

Homemade Trail Mix

[Skinny Spinach Artichoke Dip](#)

[Guacamole Salsa](#)

[Banana Nice Cream](#)

[Simple Roasted Chickpeas](#)

[Easy Shrimp Ceviche](#)

[Roasted Red Pepper Hummus Flatbread](#)



sample weekly meal plan

MONDAY

BREAKFAST: fruit smoothie

LUNCH: kale salad topped with tomatoes and tempeh with a side of roasted sweet potato

SNACK: trail mix

DINNER: seared salmon with chipotle salsa with a side of veggies

TUESDAY

BREAKFAST: egg scramble with veggies and a side of fruit

LUNCH: simple Greek salad

SNACK: roasted chickpeas

DINNER: seame tofu quinoa bowl

WEDNESDAY

BREAKFAST: Greek yogurt with granola

LUNCH: tuna power bowl

SNACK: carrots and hummus

DINNER: carrot top pesto flatbread

THURSDAY

BREAKFAST: oatmeal with nuts and cinnamon

LUNCH: Mediterranean pasta salad

SNACK: fruit smoothie

DINNER: Mediterranean quinoa stuffed peppers

FRIDAY

BREAKFAST: egg omelette with veggies and cheese

LUNCH: whole30 chicken salad

SNACK: fruit -- apple/grapes/banana

DINNER: roasted red pepper pasta made with whole wheat pasta

WEEKEND

BREAKFAST: cottage cheese breakfast bowl

LUNCH: tomato soup

SNACK: avocado toast on whole grain bread

DINNER: tofu broccoli stir fry