

# From the Food Bank Kitchen

## The Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is a heart healthy eating style based on the typical foods and recipes that you would find in Mediterranean-style cooking. It has become more popular over the past few years due to the scientific research into the benefits of eating a more Mediterranean-style diet. Research has shown that a traditional Mediterranean diet can actually reduce your risk of heart disease. The diet has been associated with lowering levels of bad cholesterol in our bodies, which reduces plaque build up on our arteries and lowers blood pressure. There has also been evidence of reduced incidence of certain types of cancers, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's.

The main focus of the Mediterranean diet is focusing on the healthier fat options. This style doesn't recommend limiting total fat consumption, but rather to make wise choices about the types of fat you eat. The Mediterranean diet discourages the intake of saturated fats and trans fats which have both been linked to increased risk of heart disease. Olive is the primary source of fat intake in the Mediterranean diet due to its high levels of monounsaturated fat. Monounsaturated fats can help reduce LDL cholesterol levels (the bad cholesterol) when used in place of saturated or trans fats, which are abundant in the American diet. The diet also heavily encourages centering your meals around plant based foods with a small side portion of protein. The diet recommends an intake of seven to ten servings a day of veggies and fruits. This is different from the American diet where most meals are based around an animal protein, with usually small sides of fruits and vegetables. The mainly plant based approach reduces overall calories and saturated fat and increases the amount of vitamins and minerals coming from our meals. They also take alternative approaches to adding salt to their food, such as using other herbs like basil, parsley, and oregano first to add flavor.

(Source: mayoclinic.org)

### Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

A contemporary approach to delicious, healthy eating

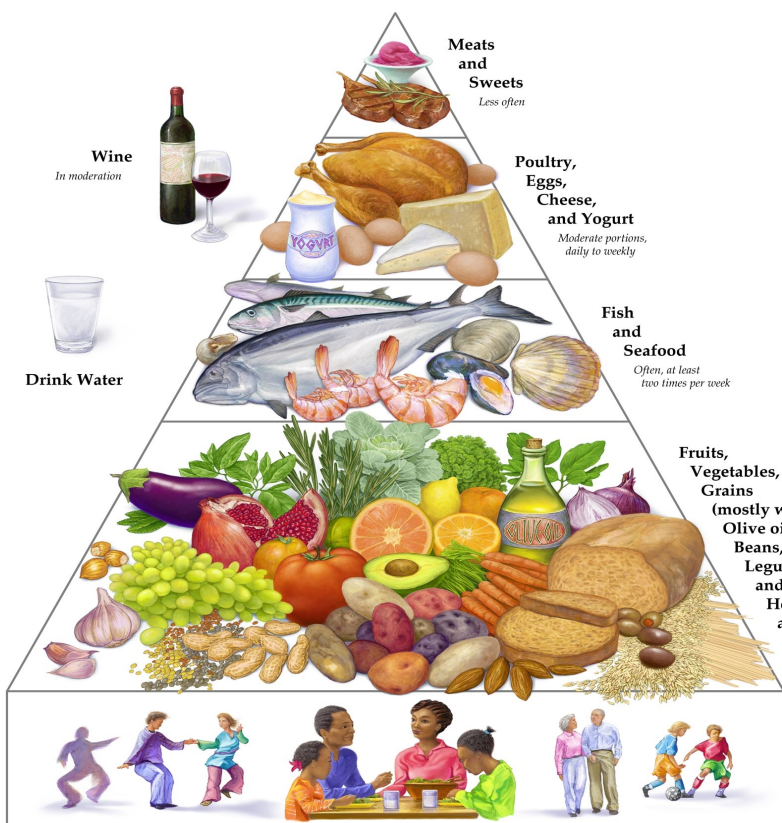


Illustration by George Middleton

### What is included in the Mediterranean diet?

- Eating primarily plant-based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes and nuts
- Replacing butter with healthy fats like olive oil and canola oil
- Using herbs and spices to reduce the amount of salt added to flavor foods
- Limiting the amount of red meat to no more than a few times a month
- Eating primarily fish and poultry at least twice a week
- Centering meals around family and friends and enjoying the time together
- Drinking red wine in moderation (optional)
- Getting plenty of exercise

If you try any of these recipes and have any comments or suggestions, please contact the Nutrition Coordinators. Either email Amber ([amberl@foodbankwma.org](mailto:amberl@foodbankwma.org)) or Kristina ([kristinam@foodbankwma.org](mailto:kristinam@foodbankwma.org)) and tell us what you think of the recipes!

# Recipes

## Grilled Zucchini Boats

Yields 6 servings

Source: [themediterraneandish](#)

### Ingredients:

- 3 zucchini, trimmed and sliced length-wise into halves
- Salt and pepper, sprinkle to your liking
- 6 oz (2/3 cup) cherry tomatoes, sliced in halves
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- Zest of 1 lemon
- Olive oil
- Dried oregano
- 3 green onions ends trimmed, chopped
- Large handful fresh parsley, chopped
- Splash lemon juice

**Directions:** Brush zucchini generously with olive oil on both sides. Season zucchini with salt, pepper, and oregano. Place zucchini, flesh-side down, on a preheated grill or skillet. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes until soft, then turn on back side and grill for another 3 to 5 minutes until this side is also tender and gains some color. Remove zucchini from heat and let cool enough to handle. To create zucchini boats, use a spoon to scoop out the flesh into a small bowl (do not discard.) Squeeze all liquid out of zucchini flesh. Now add zucchini flesh to a mixing bowl. Add the remaining ingredients. Sprinkle a little more oregano, if you like, and add a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Mix everything together to make the filling. Spoon the filling mixture into the prepared zucchini boats. Enjoy!

**Nutrition Facts:** 1 zucchini boat: 98 calories; 7.6 g fat; 5.3 g carbohydrates; 2.3 g sugar; 3.2 g protein; 125 mg sodium

## Mediterranean Bean Salad

Yields 4 servings

Source: [allrecipes.com](#)

### Ingredients:

- 1 (15.5 ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 1 teaspoon capers, rinsed and drained
- 1 (15 ounce) can kidney beans, drained
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

**Directions:** In a large bowl, stir together the garbanzo beans, kidney beans, lemon juice and zest, tomato, onion, parsley, capers, olive oil and salt. Cover, and refrigerate for about 2 hours, stirring occasionally, before serving.

**Nutrition Facts:** 329 calories; 12 g fat; 2 g saturated fat; 46 g carbohydrates; 13.4 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 12.1 g protein; 350 mg sodium.

## Spicy & Sweet Red Pepper Hummus

Yields 8 servings

Source: [allrecipes.com](#)

### Ingredients:

- 1 (15 ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 (4 ounce) jar roasted red peppers
- 1 1/2 tablespoons tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

**Directions:** In an electric blender or food processor, puree the chickpeas, red peppers, lemon juice, tahini, garlic, cumin, cayenne, and salt. Process, using long pulses, until the mixture is fairly smooth, and slightly fluffy. Make sure to scrape the mixture off the sides of the food processor or blender in between pulses. Transfer to a serving bowl and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. (The hummus can be made up to 3 days ahead and refrigerated. Return to room temperature before serving.) Sprinkle the hummus with the chopped parsley before serving.

**Nutrition Facts:** 64 calories; 2.2 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 10 g carbohydrates; 0 g sugar; 2.5 g protein; 370 mg sodium

## Honey Lime Fruit Salad

Yields 8 servings

Source: [allrecipes.com](#)

### Ingredients:

- 2 large bananas, sliced
- 1/2 pound fresh blueberries
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 (16 ounce) package fresh strawberries, hulled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 1/3 cup pine nuts (optional)

**Directions:** Combine bananas, strawberries, and blueberries in a bowl. Drizzle honey and lime juice over fruit; stir to coat. Sprinkle with pine nuts.

**Nutrition Facts:** 115 calories; 3.3 g fat; 0 g saturated fat; 22 g carbohydrates; 3.2 g fiber; 14 g sugar; 2.4 g protein; 2 mg sodium