

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

Food for Everyone



Project synopsis

Title	The Mediterranean Diet
Genre	Documental
Format	18 chapters
Length	25 minutes per chapter

THE CHAPTERS

- 1) The Mediterranean Basin
- 2) Wheat: Bread
- 3) Pasta
- 4) Olive Oil (1st part)
- 5) Olive Oil (2nd part)
- 6) Rice
- 7) More Grain. Corn, barley, rye
- 8) Wine (1st part)
- 9) Wine (2nd part)
- 10) Vegetables and Greens. Tomato, potatoes
- 11) Legumes
- 12) Fruits
- 13) Dairy - Milk, cheese and yoghurt
- 14) Fish
- 15) Meat and game (fresh and cured)
- 16) Dried fruits and nuts
- 17) Seasonings and Spices
- 18) Desserts. Honey and Sugar

SERIES TREATMENT AND CODES

A popular proverb says that we are what we eat; the same way, we can assume that we eat as we are.

The so called Mediterranean Diet is a conjunction of customs, know-hows, traditions and cultures; it is a way of living.

If we traced back the history of any ingredient of the Mediterranean cuisine we would be drawing a historical map of geography, cultures, commerce, wars, kingdoms, adventures, individual lives and art. The Mediterranean cuisine is culture its origins, in the whys its ingredients are combined, treated and mixed and in the how they are finally presented and eaten. In this sense, food becomes a means of , if you will, gustative communication that holds in itself part of the history of the people, inherited through generations the same way oral traditions are. To know the keys of this baggage can give us a more transcendent knowledge that may lead us to a better, happier and more creative way of living; food can become a means to enjoy life to share and to create.

The elements to play with in the series are:

- ✓ Raw products (traditional and incorporated throughout history.)
- ✓ Preparation (dishes and recipes)
- ✓ Life styles (culture)



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✓ Geography (clime and places)

Throughout 18 chapters a well known TV personality related to the theme, a sort of traveller who must have charisma and a taste for food and culture will unfold for us these keys in a game that will link beautiful places, authentic life styles, celebrations, country life and travel. Always finishing this journey in a table with the final outcome represented in delicious dishes that will remind us the journey we have just seen.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Nourishment through food mirrors culture and costumes acquired through time. It, therefore, becomes a process where traditions are preserved and transferred onto new generations adapting new influences to their way of being.

The history of the Mediterranean basin tells us of three basic food products: cereals, olive and grapes. Further, after invasions such as the Roman and the Arab, the commerce with the Phoenicians or the American colonization new products were adapted.

Men have always, in one way or another, eaten for pleasure even though authors as early as Socrates already related food to health, but nutrition was not taken scientifically as a health element until the XVIII Century. Nowadays, food is still a realm for pleasure despite the increasing plain scope of food for living.

This last tendency is deluding the utmost secret contained in the Mediterranean diet which lies not in the hysteria for a longer life and more in the healthy enjoyment of food.

Thus, the mosaic of products we consume today has been completed; the most outstanding being bread, fruits, legumes, vegetables, fish, olive oil and a moderate consumption of meat and wine.

HISTORY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

We may find three historical stages in the history of the Mediterranean cuisine, the ancient age that ends at the fall of the Roman Empire, the medieval age and the modern age.

The first period takes us 5.000 years back to Mesopotamia, Minor Asia and Egypt. In all these places we find the roots of our traditional Mediterranean culinary culture, particularly in Egypt to which we ought the elaboration of beer; the growing of wheat, thus the making of bread; the growing of vineyards, legumes, vegetables, beekeeping and fishing.

We must not forget that Egypt was the first great agricultural power and the Nile was so rich in limos that several harvest a year were possible; something similar, but at a lesser scale, happened in Spain at the Guadalquivir's delta.

In the Antiquity, Egyptian lentils were so famous that were exported to Greece and Rome.

Throughout the Mediterranean Basin meat was not abundant; therefore, it was not a diary dish; not so it happened with fish, which was the day by day food in river and coast line towns and was consumed fresh, desiccated or in salting. Famous were the salting factories in the south of Spain such as Sahara de los Atunes, Coto de Doñana, Cadiz, etc.

Egypt was the great Mediterranean larder producing surpluses of figs, dates, grapes, pomegranates, almonds, leeks, garlic, cucumber, melon,

watermelon, onions and many others. Also, they already domesticated animals such as oxen, partridges, and quails.

Small game was abundant all over the north Mediterranean region; rabbits and hares populated the fields before the coming of a manmade disease called myxomatosis.

Beer was one of the great Egyptian inventions. It was the national drink par excellence mixed with dates, perfumed with cinnamon and sweeten with honey.

Bread deserves a further and more specific treatment related to its history but we must pay attention to the gathering of barley, oat, rye and millet; in 450 B.C. Herodoto wrote: "Everybody is afraid that food ferments but Egyptians make a fermented bread dough"

If the principles of the Mediterranean diet are found in Egypt, in Greece is born the Mediterranean cuisine with its first recipes, to greece we ought the invention of olive oil which had three uses: for cooking, cosmetic and as lamp fuel.

Mixed with thyme, myrrh and even sea water, Greek wines were famous throughout the Mediterranean; still now under the Spanish coast waters we can find wine amphores.

Later, Rome gave to the Mediterranean cuisine its character. Romans improved the quality of olive oil, olives and vineyards; they brought lemon trees from the Hesperides garden (possibly the Canary Islands), peaches and apricots.

The second act in the history of the Mediterranean diet begins with the fall of the Roman Empire. Impoverished to its lowest extremes the regions food intake

was reduced to basic products such as rice and pasta for the common people and meat (the symbol of power among Germanics) from pigs and wild boars for the highest classes. A good outcome from this depression was that much of the indigenous cuisine was integrated. The Arab invasion from north Africa brought new elements while the Byzantine and the highly refined Persian cuisine was preserved.

The Arab cuisine brought new foundations to the European Mediterranean coast in terms of spices, fragrances and order in the food intake. Even though Arabs are forbidden to eat pork and drink alcohol, in Spain they did not follow such rules; wine was considered a love potion and pork was highly appreciated. They also introduced the irrigation systems that made possible to turn the Spanish landscape into lushly gardens peppered with farms that spread all over the Mediterranean.

The third and last act arrives with an unexpected splendour; the conquering of America after which it was introduced, through Spain, the tomato, the beans, the potatoes, the corn and the cocoa...A new world of flavors that, united to the already existing products at that time, shaped up a universally known culinary culture.



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Modern Mediterranean cuisine has its origins in France during the XVIII century while tradition continued in the rest of the Mediterranean regions to our days.



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THE ORIGINS OF THE "MEDITERRANEAN DIET" HALLMARK

During the 1950's decade a North American couple carried out a survey on nutrition in 7 countries (USA, Finland, Greece, Holland, Japan, Italy and Yugoslavia) and its relation with certain heart conditions. They discovered that the three Mediterranean countries in the study and Japan had lower rates of the disease while the rest presented four time more cases.

A first conclusion was that the reasons behind such differences had to do with the intake of olive oil in the Mediterranean countries and of fish in Japan. This study was known as "Seven Countries Study" but later as "How to eat and keep well; the Mediterranean Style."

Years later the concept of the Mediterranean Diet developed as it was obvious that the countries in the Mediterranean Basin, poorer and less industrialized than Central and north European countries, had better nutritional patterns thanks, a great deal, to the products they cultivated.

To this simple and obvious observation was added the fact that, also, the Mediterranean sunny and outdoors relaxed life style completed the secret of their well being state.



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THE COUNTRIES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

The following countries can be considered as belonging to the Mediterranean Basin: Turkey, Albania, former Yugoslavia (Slovene, Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia) Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria.

Due to their great difference in terms of culture; races; religions and social, economical and political diversity, we cannot refer to a unique and exclusive type of culinary culture or even diet for any given country; thus, Portugal which is not considered a Mediterranean country, does have Mediterranean habits in its diet.

EQUILIBRIUM AND RATIONALITY

The Mediterranean climate promotes sensible nutritional habits as opposed to other regions in Europe. The Mediterranean diet is moderate since the intake goes just in equal relation to the body's needs, lacking signs of compulsiveness; at the same time, it is assorted and restrained since the body receives right the elements it needs from hydrates to vitamins, fiber and antioxidants.

It seems clear that the Mediterranean diet fits closely what nutrition experts value as a human equilibrated diet. Nowadays it is known that olive oil help reduce cholesterol and that cellulosic fiber, found in bread and pasta, have to do with colon cancer prevention.

The Diet changes from one country to the other but it remains similar in terms of the nutritional groups. In North Africa it is common the consumption of couscous, vegetables and pod vegetables while pasta, rice, potatoes and pod vegetables are widely used in South Europe. In East Europe beans, chickpeas and rice. To summarize, the Mediterranean diet can be described as follows:

- ✓ An important intake of fruits and vegetables in the form of salads or cooked vegetables.
- ✓ A moderate intake of animal proteins; preference of fish over meat.
- ✓ The right intake of fiber and cellulosic fiber in the form of bread, pasta or cereals
- ✓ Extensive use of olive oil; raw; with bread or in salads; to fry or as a dough's ingredient.
- ✓ Direct consumption of vegetable proteins.



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✓ Moderate intake of dairy products in the form of cheese and yoghurt.

✓ Balanced consumption of wine or beer as a drink complement for food.

✓ Use of spices and seasonings in cold and hot plates to enhance their flavor.

It is proved that these products improve our health giving us a better quality of life besides being part of our history. In their use and way of elaboration lays a whole culture...a way of life.