

Seasonal Eating
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Mediterranean Style Eating
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March is National Nutrition Month® and focuses on making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. The theme for 2020 is Eat Right-Bite by Bite. Making little changes and focusing on the many healthy whole foods available to us can help us to improve our health.

The Mediterranean style of eating embraces this philosophy. Instead of being a “diet” that restricts what you eat, it focuses on a wide variety of nutritious and yet delicious foods in the right portions and proportions. It encourages physical activity every day and eating with others to enjoy our food.

The diet of the people living around the Mediterranean Sea has been extensively studied due to the lower incidence of heart disease and chronic conditions. The Mediterranean diet consistently makes the top of lists of healthy eating patterns and is one of the recommended eating patterns in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. It includes all food groups and a diversity of foods while being delicious and easy to sustain over time.



Essentially it focuses on whole foods like vegetables, dried beans and peas, whole grains, fruits, nuts, fish and seafood, poultry and eggs, some meat, dairy in the form of yogurt and cheese, herbs and spices and replacing saturated fats with monounsaturated fats like olive oil.

One of the recommendations is including 2-3 meals of fish or seafood each week. With very little saturated fat and fewer calories, fish and seafood can be a healthy choice when baked, broiled, poached, sautéed or grilled. The fattier fishes like salmon are full of omega 3 fatty acids which are healthy for the heart and for brain development in infants. Fish and seafood also provide many nutrients like vitamins D and B12, calcium, selenium, zinc and iodine.

The shrimp dish below is a perfect example of a Mediterranean friendly seafood meal. Loaded with tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, oregano and olives, it combines a base of vegetables with some protein. You can serve this on its own with some crusty whole grain bread to sop up the juices or over some whole grain pasta or brown rice.

This month, think about the choices you are making in what you eat each day and try to eat right-bite by bite.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Mediterranean Shrimp in Tomatoes

1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 pound medium raw shrimp, peeled and deveined (about 20 shrimp)
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1/2 cup roughly chopped red onion
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
2 tablespoons white wine
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1/4 cup chicken broth
1 cup roughly chopped Campari or Roma tomatoes
1/4 cup roughly chopped roasted red bell pepper
1/4 cup pitted Kalamata olives, halved
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
2 tablespoons crumbled feta cheese, optional

In a medium bowl combine the oregano, lemon pepper and salt. Add the shrimp and toss to coat. In a medium skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil until shimmering but not smoking. Add the seasoned shrimp and cook until just opaque and curled, about 2-3 minutes. Remove to a clean bowl. Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil to the skillet with the onion and garlic and sauté over medium high heat until the onion is softened and translucent. Add the wine and cook until reduced by half. Add the tomato paste and cook for a few minutes until slightly darkened. Stir in the chicken broth, tomatoes, peppers and olives. Cook until the liquid is reduced by about half, 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle in the parsley. Serve on its own or over pasta or rice sprinkled with feta cheese, if desired.