

2020 Nutrition Challenge

November & December: The Mediterranean Diet

Rose Patient, Nutritionist



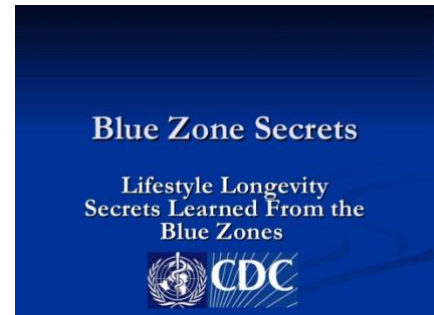
Listen to Your Body

Welcome to the delicious wonders of the well-established and well-respected Mediterranean Diet.

It provided a much-needed reprieve for me, while still allowing me to stay true to my '12 Diets in 12 Months' mission. I extended the Mediterranean Diet into December, because I didn't bounce back immediately from my Whole30 'blues' of October – it took a few weeks. The balance of foods was the perfect remedy, gently nourishing my mind and body; an important reminder to heed the signals that your body sends. *Scroll down to see my favorite recipes!*

What is it?

The Mediterranean Diet was discovered when researchers in the 1950's realized that the people of this region of the world were very healthy, and they were long lived. Assessment of their culture revealed a lifestyle that revolved around natural whole foods. The temperate climate also provided plenty of fresh air and sunlight. The supply of fish was abundant as they are located near the sea and use of the locally grown foods like olives all worked together. Our Western society has learned from this cultural balance. Many researchers have verified the authenticity and power of this diet to improve health. TMD is now considered a 'Blue Zone' where many centenarians live and thrive.



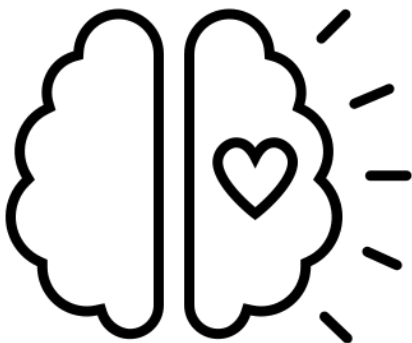
= FLEXITARIAN

Pesco-vegetarian focused, with the occasional meat makes this one of the healthiest way to eat. Lots of fresh vegetables, greens, grains, fruits, and fermented foods like pickled beets and feta cheese. Consumption of fish is also encouraged several times a week. Doctors love this diet because it is balanced and healthy. When we are faced with heart disease as our nation's leading cause of death, year after year, I cannot NOT test out this diet.



It makes me want to take a trip, stay in a pristine whitewashed villa and wade in the cerulean seas. Santorini, here I come!

Serious Brain Food



The abundance of health Omega fatty acids in this diet leaves you in a comfortable happy state. We need those Omegas for our serotonin production, so it is no wonder that I responded with such joy to these foods. According to www.brainandlife.org, people who follow this diet for 4 years “reduced their risk of thinking and memory problems by 19 percent. Wow!

<https://www.brainandlife.org/articles/food-for-thought/>
These researchers also noted that this diet has been shown to reduce inflammation and reduce heart attack and stroke. Amazing. And it’s delicious.

Best Recipes

1. Minty Couscous Salad - with cucumbers, tomatoes, Kalamata olives and feta →
2. Boule Bread & Dipping oil with Herbs – simple is often better
3. Baba Ghanoush and/or Hummus - for dipping raw veggies
4. Chicken Kabobs and Tzatziki sauce served on a bed of orzo



5. Baked Salmon served over greens (don't forget the arugula!), red peppers, cucumbers and drizzled with lemon garlic sauce
6. Skewered Shrimp grilled with my special ←seasoning
7. Chicken Shawarma in pita pockets, with veggies and garlic paste
8. Foul Mudammas – creamy fava bean skillet
9. Grilled chicken Salad – moist herbed chicken on a bed of spinach, avocado, pomegranate seeds and drizzled with olive oil and balsamic
10. Shakshuka – that amazing egg dish that works for bfast, lunch or dinner

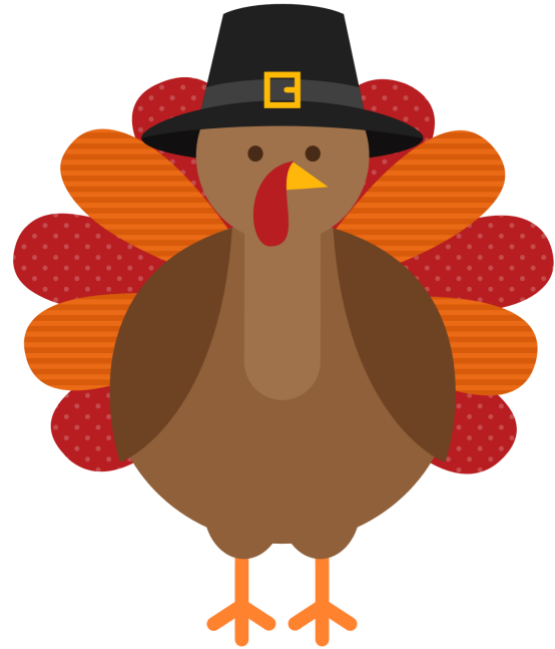
Nutritional Assessment

As with almost any diet, there are some areas of deficiency. The Mediterranean Diet does suffer from low calcium. While it has more natural sources than most diets, consumed in the form of fermented dairy and dark leafy greens, it still needs a boost. But! TMD did not suffer from potassium, magnesium or b-vitamins deficits. Easily the best so far - especially when you consider it also nicely balances macros with a minimal amount of simple carbs. With seafood providing ample Zinc and Omega fatty acids, it is no wonder that doctors and nutritionists alike often recommend this diet.



As humans, part of our nourishment is social and spiritual.

- We feed this through hugs, social gatherings, church and family traditions. Having to break away from loved ones may be wise but can (and does) create anxiety and tension.
- The impact of this pandemic on mental health is an essential discussion that needs to be addressed. It is a secondary consequence of social distancing precautions. Isolation also sets the stage for domestic abuse and even suicide. I am prayerful that my readers will find positive ways to connect to order to feed their spirit.
- Two of our adult children did not travel home due to virus concerns. Our youngest, who had to start her first semester of graduate school at home, helped with the food. It was yummy. We Zoomed with the others, but it wasn't the same.

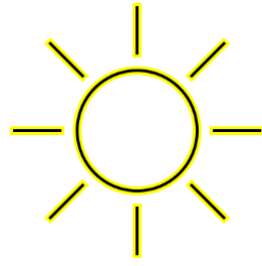


No man is an island

After twice experiencing a **DEPRESSION** related to dietary changes, I realized that this is more than food. Yes, **FOOD** is extremely important in the pursuit of happiness. But we also need to move. Having my **EXCERCISE** routines highjacked by Covid compounded the effects. Both of these: food and exercise, are often highly **SOCIAL** activities.

Contact and comradery are vital to our human experience. These are facilitated by food, exercise and social activities. **All 3** of which were collectively denied to us for 9 months now – and will probably continue for another 9. It is **IMPERATIVE** that we all find creative solutions to these restrictions to restore our mental outlook.

Exercise Goals for Mental Health



Regular exercise and sunlight are essential components to good mental health. Exercise helps to open up the blood flow to deliver vital nutrients to all of our cells. Sunshine, Vitamin D, is also a major player in supporting out immune system. For those of us in the northern climates, it can be a challenge to get into an exercise routine with short cold winter days that leave you huddling indoors. My time-honored solution: amp up the yoga classes.



I do love a good yoga session. I'm not any good at it, but because I'm naturally flexible, the hour of stretching and holding poses seems to reset my mind. I love the variety of instructors, and the anonymity of the practice. It puts me into a world of quiet, even though I'm surrounded by 20 others mats in the heat of the small room.

Anything but OM

Well, at my last yoga class back in March 2020 (!) was anything but OM. My body wasn't cooperating, and my balance was poor. Then, a lady next to me – you know, one of those rubber band types who can do the dragonfly pose as easily as if she can breathe – she stopped what she was doing and came over and started putting blocks under my hands and physically correcting my position!!! *This is never okay to do. Don't ever do this, no matter what your intentions.* I'll ask the instructor if I'm struggling, thank you. I stopped and just looked at her like, *What the... Back off superfly!* I am tipping over just fine on my own. Lol!

Stir Crazy:

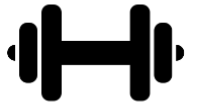
Then Covid happened, and we all had to drum up creative ways to exercise. No more crazy yoga ladies, no more sports club, just walks. Sigh. Thanks to this 12 Diets Challenge, I did not suffer the quarantine 15. In fact, I lost 10 pounds. But the lack of social contact and staring at my cozy home walls was making me a little stir claustrophobic. By the end of November, I realized that even though I have done lots of walks with my sweet dog, Bordeaux, it just wasn't enough.



SO, I SET A GOAL

26.2 I am going to run a marathon again! Would you like to join me?

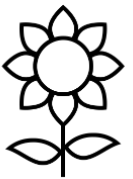
I did this once, in 2016, so I know that I can do it again. I'm a little smarter about it and can now adjust my training. Here's the thing... I'm not in my 30's or my 40's anymore. So, getting fit needs a softer smarter approach. I need two days to recover from a run. Also, my shoulders and upper body are not strong enough. (This is the decade where you see many friends and neighbors start getting shoulder surgery because they don't do things to keep their body fit). Well, I don't want shoulder surgery, so I also decided that weight training must be part of this plan. Step 1: run M, W, F on a treadmill at the (now open) sports club. Step 2: Lift weights on T, Th, Sat, I can do this at home, focusing on upper body/core.



Covid restrictions did thwart my goal of running a 5K every month during the 12 Diets Challenge. It deprived me of the excitement of the race, the crowd dressed up in costume and crazy socks, and the volunteers at the water stations focused on holding that cup right so I can grab it just so. The bananas at the finisher's tent and the satisfying weight of the medal on my neck. I didn't appreciate the power of food, exercise and social activities until now. It's big.



There are no road races in sight as of this writing, but I hope things will open up and for road races to return in 2021 as the vaccine gets distributed. I did set MONTHLY GOALS for distance and will have to get those done on the treadmill until I can run outside. That means a 5K in December, a 10K in January, a 10-mile run in February and a half marathon in March. My marathon goal is for the month of June, and then I want to run a second one in October 2021.



This physical engagement has also helped my mental outlook. 😊
I have to thank The Mediterranean Diet for its healing balance and delicious meals.

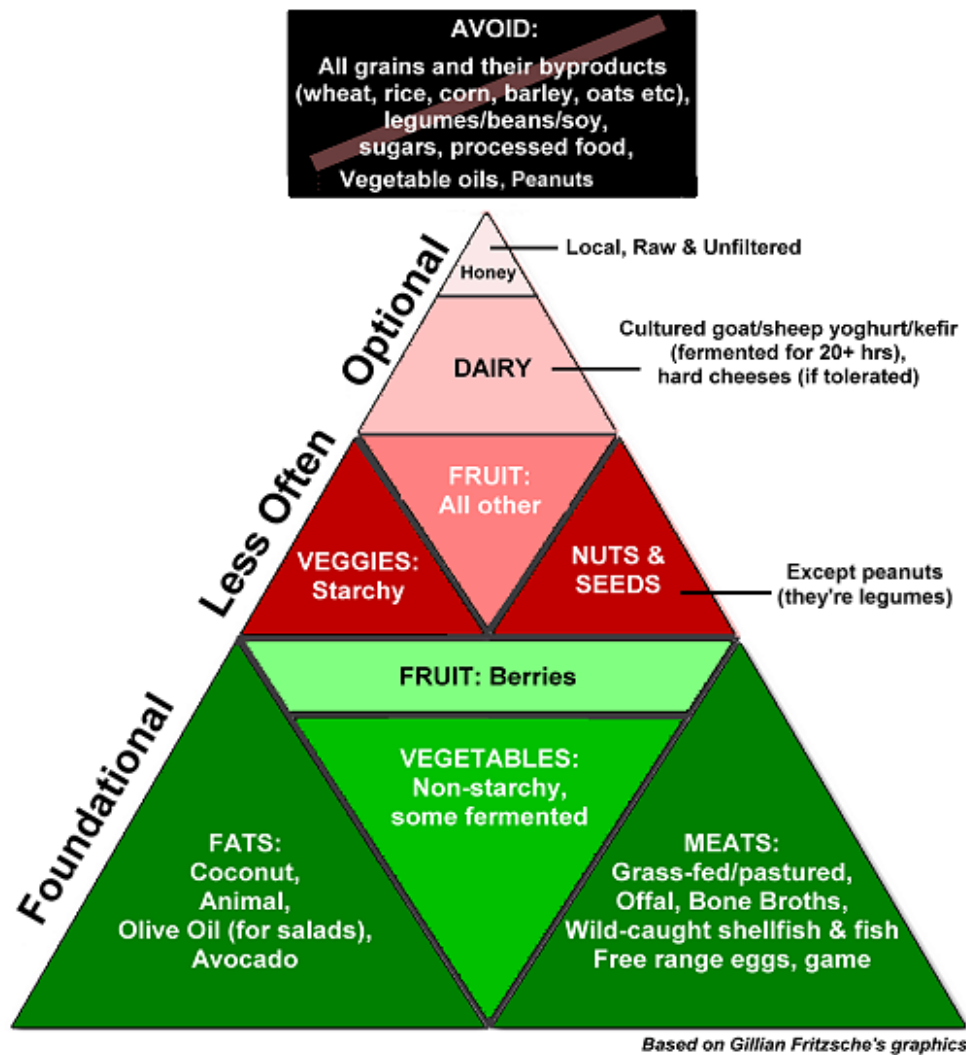
Opa! A December to Remember: I continued with The Mediterranean Diet a second month, to reinforce the lessons I've learned. There is high social acceptance of this diet and no major kitchen hacks. I found it to be one of the most balanced and enjoyable ways to eat since I started the 12 Diets in 12 Months Challenge. Kudos! (That's a Greek word for praise!) IKR - mic drop!



But my 12 Diets Challenge doesn't end until March! I have 3 more to go!
If you have any suggestions, please send them via Messenger.
Until Next Time, Remember
Be Kind to Yourself! ~ Rose

Announcing January 2021:

Paleo Food Pyramid



PALEO Month!!