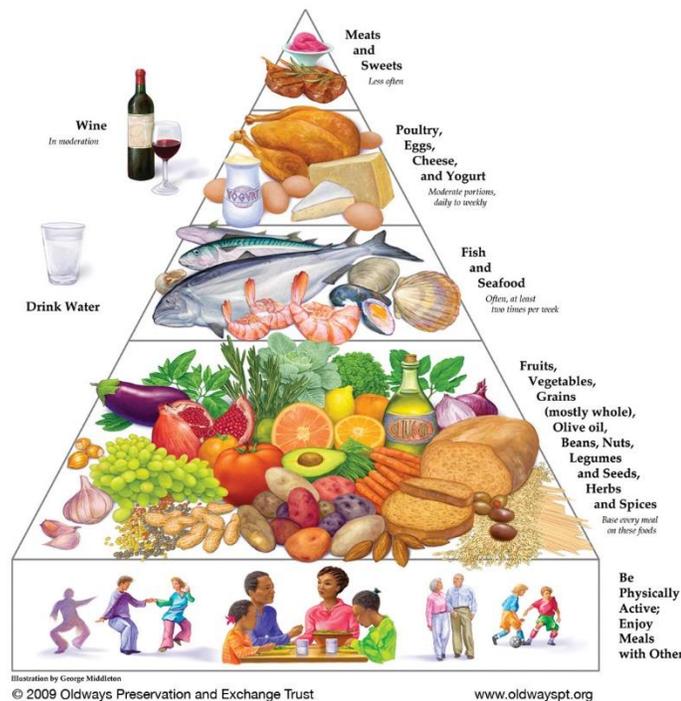


Olive Oil

For this week's blog we are discussing Olive Oil. With that, we must discuss the Mediterranean diet. As luck would have it, it's May 1st and May is National Mediterranean Diet Month! This "diet" is more of a lifestyle that focuses on plants, healthy fats and seafood. The term "plants" in this diet refers to whole grains, nuts, seeds, legumes, vegetables and fruit, not an actual house plant that you have in a pot. Another aspect of the diet is including healthy fats which refers to avocado, olive oil, fats from nuts, seeds and fish. The diet does include poultry, eggs, cheese, dairy but are in a lesser amount. Finally, sweets, red meats and other foods higher in saturated fat, are the least amount and meant to be enjoyed with *minimal frequency*. (See the pyramid below and refer to the website, Oldways.org)



Mediterranean Diet Pyramid



I know that there are a lot of people who have an aversion or allergies to fish and seafood. One thing you can do if you aren't allergic, is to try:

- (1) different fish- ones you may not be familiar with. Salt water fish tend to be milder in flavor.

(2) different cooking techniques that the fish has been prepared for instance: grilled or air fried.

(3) you can reap the benefits of fish by eating canned tuna.

If you must avoid seafood, some milks are fortified with DHA, which is the good fats from fish and no, it doesn't taste like you are drinking fishy milk. If that isn't up your alley either, ask your doctor about taking a fish oil supplement.

Why are we discussing this way of eating? This diet has been scientifically researched and has been found to be one of the most effective ways of preventing heart disease. Multiple studies on the diet have been conducted by the [National Institute of Health \(NIH\)](#), [The New England Journal of Medicine](#) and many more. This week's recipe includes subbing olive oil for butter, which is a small change that you can make to introduce this lifestyle/diet into your own.

Extra virgin olive oil can be substituted for butter or margarine in a lot of baking recipes by using a 3:4 ratio. This means 3 parts olive oil to 4 parts butter. So, if a baking recipe calls for a stick of butter (8 tablespoons) use 6 tablespoons of olive oil; For ½ cup of butter, you'd need ¾ cup + 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Refer to the chart below.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil Conversion Chart

| Butter/Margarine | Extra Virgin Olive Oil |
|------------------|------------------------|
| 1 TSP | 3/4 TSP |
| 1 TBSP | 2-1/4 TSP |
| 2 TBSP | 1-1/2 TBSP |
| 1/4 CUP | 3 TBSP |
| 1/3 CUP | 1/4 CUP |
| 1/2 CUP | 1/4 CUP PLUS 2 TBSP |
| 2/3 CUP | 1/2 CUP |
| 3/4 CUP | 1/2 CUP PLUS 1 TBSP |
| 1 CUP | 3/4 C |

It's not recommended (but not illegal) to substitute olive oil for butter when using the "creaming" method. Creaming method refers to when you have to beat butter and sugar together, as is the start of many cookie recipes. Subbing EVOO can work with *some* cookies but not all. It does work best in quick breads, brownies and muffins or when a recipe calls for melted butter.

Thankfully, olive oil tastes great with all kinds of ingredients, including nuts, cheeses, fruits, herbs, spices, and aromatics. I love to dip bread into a small bowl of olive oil with diced garlic and balsamic vinegar. You can also appreciate olive oil by adding fresh herbs and/or garlic cloves to flavor it. Do this by transferring your olive oil to another oil dispenser, bottle or jar with those herbs in it. Let it sit and infuse for at least 24 hours. There are other methods as well, like [these olive oils](#), but are a little more involved.

For this week, I hope you get a chance to try out the enchilada recipe this week, it's well worth the time! Chef tip: You can easily substitute the chicken for beans to make it vegetarian. Try working in more olive oil into your diet throughout the week, try new foods (seafood) and cooking techniques and see if you can gradually work this Med diet into your lifestyle!

Bon Appetit!
~~ Chef Jen



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