

Olive oil and fresh, sun-ripened plant-based foods: The Mediterranean Diet as a winning combination for health

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A researcher from the University of Warwick says that to promote better health within Western societies, it's essential to reshape our food culture.

This means moving away from unhealthy, ultra-processed, sugar-laden, and fiber-depleted foods and gravitating towards wholesome, fiber-rich, plant-based foods reminiscent of the Mediterranean diet.

Dr. Thomas Barber is an Associate Clinical Professor and lead of Obesity Services at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire. He has been exploring the secrets to a healthier life and the transformative potential of the Mediterranean Diet. The key to its success lies within 'healthy fats,' particularly olive oil. With [overwhelming evidence](#) supporting the health-promoting effects of the Mediterranean Diet (MD), researchers say it's time to embrace this approach to food for a better and healthier future.

The Mediterranean diet has long been revered for its ability to reduce the risk of heart disease, enhance cognitive function, and maintain a healthy weight. So, why isn't everyone adopting this path to well-being? As its name suggests, the MD thrives in Mediterranean countries, where olive oil, fresh fruits, and vegetables abound throughout the year. Yet, this very abundance points to a significant hurdle faced by the rest of the world.

You might want to try vegetable-heavy dishes, like griddled chicken with quinoa Greek salad, salmon with hummus & and roasted tomatoes, or stuffed peppers, finished with an olive oil-based dressing and fresh fruits for dessert.

"Availability of the MD's essential components, particularly during winter months, might explain the lack of its widespread adoption outside the Mediterranean regions," explains Dr. Thomas Barber. "But, it's not just about availability. Millennia of cultural integration and alignment with the Mediterranean lifestyle and climate make it harder for non-Mediterranean populations to fully embrace the MD."

Over generations, the MD has become ingrained in Mediterranean cultures, seamlessly blending into the fabric of their daily lives. The joy of eating alfresco and the reduced reliance on hot [food](#) naturally complement the dietary principles of the MD. For those from non-Mediterranean backgrounds, cultural hurdles present challenges in adopting this [healthy lifestyle](#). Moreover, the palatability of ingesting substantial amounts of fruit, vegetables, and [olive oil](#) daily can be an obstacle for many.

In addition, researchers celebrate the environmental impact of the MD, as it's very environmentally friendly as well, particularly regarding water usage and CO₂ emissions. The EAT-Lancet Commission, tasked with developing healthy and environmentally sustainable diets by 2050, produced targets that are very similar to traditional MD.

"This calls for a collective 'to-do' list to encourage and inspire each other to cook from raw ingredients and rediscover the joy and fulfillment of healthy eating as our ancestors have done for eons," adds Dr. Thomas Barber.

Provided by University of Warwick

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