

# **15 Quick and Easy**

## **Mediterranean Recipes**

*Alexandra Beck*

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# Introduction

The *Mediterranean diet* is the way of eating and preparing food associated with the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea (Italy, Spain, France, Morocco, Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Israel).

The Mediterranean diet is one of the healthiest in the world, as demonstrated both by scientific studies and by the longevity of its followers.

The key components of the Mediterranean diet are:

- Eating lots of **vegetables, fruits and nuts**
- Using **olive oil** rather than butter or margarine in cooking
- Eating **whole grain bread, yogurt and cheese**
- Using healthy **herbs and spices** such as thyme, rosemary and parsley
- Limiting consumption of **red meat** to once or twice a week
- Eating **fish and seafood** at least twice a week
- Drinking **red wine** in moderation (no more than a glass per day for women and two glasses for men)

For references to the latest research on the health benefits of these foods, as well as on the healthiest cooking methods and eating habits, check out this url: <http://smartcooking.weebly.com/healthy-cooking---bibliography.html>.

# Recipes

**Important note:** Each recipe serves 3 and takes 30 minutes or less (often *much* less) to prepare, except a couple of mains that take about 45 minutes.

## ***Mediterranean salad***



### **Ingredients**

- 1 head Oak leaf lettuce
- ½ cup (120 g) hearts of palm, canned
- ½ cup (120 g) pomegranate seeds
- ½ cup (120 g) pitted olives
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. In a salad bowl, whisk together salt, pepper, olive oil, mustard and vinegar
2. Rinse and spin-dry lettuce leaves, add to the bowl
3. Add olives and pomegranate seeds; slice hearts of palm and add to the bowl
4. Toss everything together and adjust the seasoning.

Serve.

## ***Easy Hummus***



**Note:** The Tahini paste required for this recipe is available in Middle Eastern, Indian and health food stores (where it may be called *sesame spread* or *paste*).

### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup (250 g) chickpeas, canned
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tbsp Tahini (sesame paste)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Rinse chickpeas, squeeze lemon juice and process with the other ingredients using a blender or a food processor.
2. Transfer to a serving bowl, drizzle with olive oil and paprika. Serve garnished with olives and fresh herbs.

## ***Garlic and rosemary toasts***



### **Ingredients**

- 9 slices bread (preferably artisanal)
- 1 large garlic clove
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 small bunch fresh rosemary
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Turn on the oven to 450 F (220 C) to preheat; crush garlic clove with a knife handle and cut it in half
2. Grill bread slices on the top rack until they turn golden brown (4-5 minutes)
3. Rinse and finely chop rosemary
4. Transfer the toasts to a serving platter, rub with garlic, spread a little butter, and sprinkle with pepper and rosemary

Serve.

## Super-quick Caprese salad



**Note:** The classic Caprese (tomato and mozzarella salad) is a delicious and quick appetizer. In this version, it's made at rocket speed thanks to cherry tomatoes that don't need slicing.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups (500 g) red and yellow cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup (250 g) mozzarella cheese
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- A few fresh basil leaves for garnish

### Directions

1. Rinse tomatoes, basil leaves and mozzarella, slice mozzarella into rounds and basil in thin strips
2. Divide between plates, sprinkle with olive oil, season and serve.



## *Spanish-style roast pork*



### **Ingredients**

- 1,5 lb (750 g) boneless pork loin roast
- 1 onion
- 1 cup (250 g) cherry tomatoes
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ cup (120 g) pitted black olives
- Salt, pepper and dried herbs to taste

### **Directions**

1. Chop onion, cut pork roast into 3 segments, so that it cooks faster
2. Place pork roast and onion in a baking dish, season, press garlic over the roast and coat with olive oil
3. Cook in the middle of the oven for 10 minutes at 400 F (200 C)
4. Rinse cherry tomatoes; remove roast from oven, add tomatoes to the dish and cook for 10 more minutes
5. Remove roast from oven, add olives and cook on the top rack for the final 10 minutes.

Garnish with fresh rosemary springs and serve.

## ***Easy Dolma (Oriental stuffed vegetables)***



### **Ingredients**

- 1 lb (500 g) ground beef
- 1 cup quick cooking rice
- 3 eggplants
- 3 bell peppers
- 2 firm apples
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 1 onion
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Pre-cook rice in salted water for 10 minutes; chop onion
2. While the rice cooks, heat olive oil and cook ground beef and onion until beef is no longer pink; season and reserve
3. Rinse veggies and apples, halve eggplants and core them, core bell peppers and slice apples in wedges
4. Mix rice with beef and stuff eggplants and peppers; boil 1 cup water
5. Arrange stuffed vegetables in a large saucepan, add cherry tomatoes and apples, water and tomato paste. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for about 25 minutes.

Serve.

## ***Bell pepper and mushroom pizza***



### **Ingredients**

- 10 oz store-bought wholewheat pizza dough
- 1 red and 1 yellow bell peppers
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 lb (500 g) Portobello or button mushrooms
- ½ cup (120 g) pitted black olives
- 3 oz (100 g) grated Parmesan cheese
- 8 oz (250 g) Mozzarella cheese
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt, pepper and herbs (such as basil) to taste

### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 425 F (220 C), rinse and cut peppers into strips and mushrooms into slices; dice Mozzarella, halve olives and crush garlic
2. Oil a baking sheet, pat pizza dough into a thin round and pre-bake it for 6-7 minutes
3. In a skillet, heat 3 tbsp olive oil and stir fry peppers and mushrooms over medium to high heat for about 5 minutes, season to taste
4. Remove pizza crust from oven, rub with garlic
5. Spread mushrooms and peppers leaving a narrow margin; top with olives, Parmesan and Mozzarella, and bake at 400 F (200 C) for 15-20 minutes until cheese starts to bubble and crust turns golden-brown

Drizzle 1 tbsp olive oil over pizza before serving.

## ***Roasted sardines with garlic and herbs***



**Note:** Sardines are very healthy: they contain high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, as well as important minerals and vitamins. Buy sardines fresh and cook the same day, if possible – they rot fast.

### **Ingredients**

- 12 sardines (ask your fishmonger to gut and clean them)
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tbsp dried thyme or parsley
- 2 lemons (1 for garnish)
- 1 tsp salt

### **Directions**

1. Wash the sardines under cold water and pat-dry with paper towels; press garlic
2. In a small bowl, combine pressed garlic, thyme, 1 tbsp olive oil and juice of ½ lemon
3. Arrange sardines in an oven dish, stuff them with the garlic mixture, sprinkle with the juice of ½ lemon, salt and remaining olive oil
4. Bake in the middle of the oven for 10-12 minutes and then on the top rack for 8-10 more minutes. Serve with lemon wedges.

## *Sun-kissed vegetable quiche*



### **Ingredients**

- 1 wholewheat unbaked pie crust
- 1 bell pepper
- 1 eggplant
- 3 oz sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 large onion
- 2 clove garlic
- 6 oz (200 g) extra firm tofu
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp sour cream
- 2 tbsp Greek yogurt
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp grated Swiss cheese
- ½ tsp ground turmeric, salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 425 F (220 C); crush garlic cloves
2. Rinse and slice eggplant lengthwise; rinse and halve bell pepper and grill them on the top rack for 7-8 minutes, after which chop them
3. Pierce the surface of the crust with a fork to avoid air bubbles and pre-bake it in a buttered oven dish for 5-6 minutes
4. Chop onion and mince garlic; drain tofu, then squeeze it in your palms or use cheesecloth to get more water out and dice it
5. Sauté onion, garlic and tofu on medium to high heat for a few minutes, season
6. In a salad bowl, mix together sour cream, yogurt, egg, turmeric, grated cheese, tofu and the vegetables
7. Remove the crust from oven, spread the cream and veggy mixture, and bake at 400 F (200 C) for about 20 minutes).



## *Quick risotto with asparagus and arugula*



### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup precooked wholegrain rice (cooking in 10-12 minutes)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 bunch (1 lb / 500 g) asparagus
- 4 oz (150 g) arugula
- 2 tbsp cream of balsamic vinegar (or balsamic vinegar)
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 2 oz (50 g) grated parmesan
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Bring salted water to a boil in your food steamer; rinse and cut asparagus into 1-inch segments
  2. Cook rice in the water and steam-cook asparagus in the insert for 7-8 minutes
  3. In a small saucepan, combine cream with chicken bouillon cube and grated parmesan, and cook for a few minutes over low heat, stirring frequently
  4. Pour cream sauce and asparagus into the saucepan with the rice and cook for about 10 minutes over low heat; adjust the seasoning
  5. During that time, rinse and spin-dry arugula
- Serve risotto with arugula and a cream of balsamic vinegar

## ***Pasta with sautéed mushrooms, carrots and scallions***



### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup (250 g) pasta
- 1 cup (250 g) mushrooms
- 2-3 carrots
- 2-3 cloves garlic
- ½ bunch scallions
- ½ bunch fresh parsley
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp white wine
- Grated cheese (such as Swiss)
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Bring salted water to a boil and cook pasta al dente, after which drain it and keep warm
2. Clean mushrooms, rinse and brush carrots, rinse parsley and scallions and crush garlic
3. Slice mushrooms, cut carrots julienne-style using a mandoline slicer, chop scallions and parsley
4. In a skillet, heat olive oil and sauté scallions, carrots and mushrooms for 5-6 minutes
5. Add parsley and wine, press garlic, season
6. Sauté for a minute, adjust the seasoning and serve with pasta and grated cheese.

## *French ratatouille with baked parmesan polenta*



### **Ingredients**

*For ratatouille:*

- 4 assorted bell peppers
- 1 eggplant
- 3 tomatoes
- 2 zucchini
- 1 large onion
- 2 clove garlic
- 2 tbsp fresh herbs (thyme, rosemary, parsley) or 1 tbsp dried herbs
- 2 tbsp olive oil

*For polenta:*

- 2 cup (450 g) instant polenta
- 1 oz (30 g) butter
- 2 oz (50 g) grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Rinse and chop vegetables; crush garlic cloves; preheat oven to 400 F (200 C)
2. In a large skillet, heat 2 tbsp olive oil, sauté onion for a few minutes, then add eggplant, then peppers and cook for 6-7 minutes, stirring occasionally.
3. In the meantime, start cooking polenta: bring 6 cup (1,3 l) salted water to a boil and pour in polenta in a slow steady stream whisking continuously; continue stirring over low to medium heat for 4-5 minutes until polenta thickens. Remove from heat, stir in parmesan and butter, and salt and pepper to taste.
5. Line a baking sheet with non-stick baking paper, spoon polenta into it and smooth the surface. Bake in oven for 15-20 minutes, then remove from oven and allow to cool.
4. During that time, add zucchini, tomatoes, garlic and herbs to the vegetables in the skillet. Cover and cook over low heat for 10-15 minutes.



## *Moroccan-style carrots with quinoa*



**Note:** Full disclosure – quinoa is not a traditionally Mediterranean grain. As a matter of fact, it's an Andean seed. But considering its healthy properties it's certainly a great new addition to the Mediterranean diet!

### **Ingredients**

- 1 lb (500 g) carrots
- 1 cup quinoa
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic
- ½ lemon
- 2 tbsp fresh cilantro (coriander)
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 ground paprika
- Salt and black pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Rinse, brush and slice carrots into thin rounds; rinse cilantro and crush garlic
2. Rinse quinoa in a fine mesh strainer, drain and pour into your steamer's saucepan with 1,5 cup cold water, cover, bring to a boil and simmer for 12 minutes
3. In the steamer insert, cook carrots, stirring occasionally; mince garlic and chop cilantro
4. In a medium skillet, heat olive oil and sauté garlic for 2-3 minutes, add carrots, spices, cilantro and lemon juice and sauté for a few more minutes
5. Remove quinoa from heat and let it sit, covered, for 5 minutes, after which fluff with a fork and season.

Serve carrots with quinoa.

## ***Levantine Tabouli (Tabbouleh)***



### **Ingredients**

- 1 cup (230 g) wholegrain couscous
- 1 cup (230 g) extra-firm tofu
- 3 large tomatoes
- 1 cucumber
- 1 small lemon
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 oz (50 g) fresh mint leaves
- 1 bunch fresh parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

### **Directions**

1. Pour couscous in a bowl, pour boiling water to cover it with a generous margin, season and let it stand, covered, for a few minutes
2. Drain tofu, then squeeze it in your palms or use cheesecloth to get more water out, and dice it
3. As soon as the couscous grains soak up the water at the top, fluff them with a fork
4. Rinse and chop tomatoes, cucumber, mint leaves and parsley
5. In a large salad bowl, mix olive oil with lemon juice
6. Add all the other ingredients and season to taste.

In summer, chill before serving.

# ***One-pot spaghetti dish***

**Note:** This is a really quick healthy dish that only takes 15 minutes to cook.

## **Ingredients**

- 8 oz wholewheat spaghetti
- ½ head broccoli
- 1 yellow squash
- 2 ripe tomatoes
- 1 clove garlic
- 3-4 springs rosemary
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- Salt, black pepper, paprika and turmeric to taste
- Parmesan rind (optional)

## **Directions**

1. Bring water to a boil (use more or less water depending on how “soupy” you want your dish)
2. Rinse and chop zucchini and tomatoes into cubes, and broccoli into small florets
3. When the water boils, add a pinch of salt and the olive oil, then all the other ingredients
4. Press garlic, season and simmer for 10-12 minutes
5. Adjust the seasoning and serve

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With warm wishes,

Alexandra

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