[](http://www.google.com/imgres?q=mediterranean&hl=en&sa=G&rlz=1T4TSNF_enUS442US442&biw=1366&bih=530&gbv=2&tbm=isch&tbnid=7QwHW9xrTbp6hM:&imgrefurl=http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/picturegalleries/5011613/Mediterranean-island-guide-Cyprus-Malta-and-Tunisia.html&docid=BcPRIxSXK17qKM&w=590&h=400&ei=RONfTsvZBNKatwfjhJ2mCw&zoom=1)

**Chapter One**

***What is The Prasouda Diet?***

* ***What* the Mediterranean People Eat**
* ***How* the Mediterranean People Eat**
* ***Why* it’s Different**

These days, there seems to be a new diet making headlines every time you pick up a magazine or turn on the television. Weight loss is big business. Obesity is at an all-time high and the health effects of being overweight much more clear. Diets that promise an easier, faster way to lose weight are more popular than ever and everyone is scrambling to create the newest best-seller. Ironically, the most respected and successful diets have been around for centuries and the people that eat them don’t eat them to lose weight. The Prasouda or Mediterranean Diet is one of those diets.

The Prasouda Diet is a way of eating that is common among the coastal areas of Greece, Italy and Spain. It hasn’t changed much over the years, but it’s recently gotten a great deal of attention from the medical community, nutrition professionals, the media and dieters. It isn’t new science and it isn’t rocket science. It isn’t about counting calories, measuring grams or combining foods in just the “right” way at just the “right” time. The Prasouda Diet isn’t just about ***what*** the Mediterranean people eat, but about ***how*** they eat.

***What the Mediterranean People Eat***

The Mediterranean diet focuses on:

* Fresh vegetables and fruits
* Whole grains
* Seafood and fish
* Beans and legumes and nuts

Dairy products don’t figure very prominently in the diet and olive or canola oil is preferred over butter.

The Mediterranean people season their food with herbs (preferably fresh) far more than they do salt, so the Mediterranean diet is very low in sodium.

Red meat, pork and even poultry are far more uncommon in the daily diet than Americans are used to. Red meat is featured as an entrée perhaps three or four times per month. Vegetarian and seafood-based dishes are much more common, with poultry coming in at a distant third.

Grains are often eaten in the form of legumes and beans, but the Mediterranean people also enjoy their bread. However, they choose dense, whole-grain breads and artisanal loaves with wonderful texture and flavor.

This daily diet is rich in vitamins, healthy fats, good fiber and antioxidants. It’s also loaded with variety and flavor. However, the way the Mediterranean people eat is probably almost as important as what they’re eating.

***How the Mediterranean People Eat***

The Mediterranean people love food.

They love and celebrate each ingredient for its flavor, texture and healthful goodness. Dishes are prepared simply and with a few carefully chosen ingredients, so that each one can be enjoyed for what it brings to the dish.

**They Eat Locally**

They focus on freshness. As in many European cultures, the Mediterranean diet is based on what’s available locally, in season and freshly picked. Most people, even city-dwellers, have a pot of tomatoes on the terrace or a kitchen sill lined with tiny clay pots of herbs. Produce that isn’t grown at home is purchased from people who *do* grow it at home, at the local farmer’s market.

This focus on freshness extends to fish and seafood as well. Because the Prasouda diet is based on the diet of a coastal people, seafood is a mainstay. Fresh fish, mollusks and shellfish are everywhere and the fresher the better.

**They Eat Seasonally**

Because of this love for the freshest of ingredients, the Mediterranean people eat seasonally. Tomatoes and melons are cause for a summer celebration. Asparagus and baby lettuces signal the beginning of spring. Pumpkin and winter squash are for cozy autumn evenings. Because so much of their food is bought from local growers and purveyors, the people of the Mediterranean eat seasonally by default. Every food is loved and savored in its proper time.

**They Eat Purposefully and Joyfully**

The Mediterranean people, like the French and inland Italians, are very purposeful eaters. They eat to celebrate and they eat to celebrate food itself. They love to socialize and talk during a meal, but they seldom read, watch television or work while they eat. When they eat, they do so consciously. They actually smell and taste their food.

***Why the Mediterranean Diet is So Different from Ours***

In America, we rarely eat to enjoy our food. We eat because we’re hungry, because we’re bored or because it’s time to eat.

**We Don’t Think About It**

We don’t eat very consciously. We eat while standing up, while driving, while cleaning up the dinner dishes and while watching TV. Eating is more of a habit or subconscious thing than a celebration of things that taste good. It’s just as well, because we often eat things that don’t.

**We Don’t Even Like It**

How many times have you eaten something just because it was served to you? Do you even remember what you had for lunch? Can you taste the bread on your sandwich or is it just something to keep your egg salad from hitting the floor? Do you actually like frozen spinach or did you eat it last night because you’re supposed to have a green vegetable with your meal? More often than not, an American eats something because it’s handy, while a Mediterranean eats something because it’s good.

**We Don’t Know Where It’s From**

Most Americans certainly don’t eat locally or seasonally. We’re grown so used to seeing watermelon in winter and pears in the summer that we don’t even know what season they’re supposed to be harvested. Food is trucked in from thousands of miles away, so that everything is available all of the time.

While that makes for a varied diet, it doesn’t make for a very tasty or healthy one. Most produce loses much of its health value before it ever reaches the grocery store. It’s also picked before it’s ripe, to help it stand up to shipping. That means it doesn’t have anywhere near the flavor of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables. Maybe the reason your kids don’t like tomatoes is because they don’t actually know what one tastes like! Just as importantly, if you can eat strawberries anytime you want, how special are they, really? About as special as they taste.

***Summing Up***

* The Mediterranean people love to eat and they value their ingredients.
* They eat the freshest food possible, getting it locally and in season whenever they can.
* They forgo most meats and eat little dairy or butter.
* Their daily diet is filled with fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, delicious seafood, filling, low-fat legumes/beans, and nuts and oils that are good for them.
* They eat these foods purposefully, savoring and enjoying what’s on their plates.
* They focus on their food when they eat, rather than multi-tasking or eating just because they’re watching TV.

In short, the Prasouda or Mediterranean Diet is for people to actually love to eat.