



— AMERICA'S —  
**TEST KITCHEN**

THE COMPLETE  
**MEDITERRANEAN**  
COOKBOOK

**500 VIBRANT, KITCHEN-TESTED RECIPES  
FOR LIVING AND EATING WELL EVERY DAY**

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“This title would serve as an excellent gift for college students, young professionals, newlyweds, and anyone who’s learning to cook.”

***LIBRARY JOURNAL ON 100 RECIPES***

“A one-volume kitchen seminar, addressing in one smart chapter after another the sometimes surprising whys behind a cook’s best practices....You get the myth, the theory, the science, and the proof, all rigorously interrogated as only America’s Test Kitchen can do.”

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“This book is a comprehensive, no-nonsense guide...a well-thought-out, clearly explained primer for every aspect of home baking.”

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“This encyclopedia of meat cookery would feel completely overwhelming if it

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**MEDITERRANEAN**  
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**500 VIBRANT, KITCHEN-TESTED RECIPES**  
FOR LIVING AND EATING WELL EVERY DAY

THE EDITORS AT  
AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: America's Test Kitchen (Firm)

Title: The complete Mediterranean cookbook : 500 vibrant, kitchen-tested recipes for living and eating well every day / the editors at America's Test Kitchen.

Description: Brookline, MA : America's Test Kitchen, [2017] | Includes index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016037753 | ISBN 9781940352640

Subjects: LCSH: Cooking, Mediterranean. | LCGFT: Cookbooks.

Classification: LCC TX725.M35 C56 2017 | DDC 641.59/1822--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016037753>

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-940352-65-7

AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

17 Station Street, Brookline, MA 02445

Distributed by Penguin Random House Publisher Services

Tel: 800-733-3000

Pictured on front cover: [Grilled Swordfish Skewers with Tomato-Scallion Caponata](#)

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# Welcome to America's Test Kitchen

This book has been tested, written, and edited by the folks at America's Test Kitchen, a very real 2,500-square-foot kitchen located just outside of Boston. It is the home of *Cook's Illustrated* magazine and *Cook's Country* magazine and is the Monday-through-Friday destination for more than 60 test cooks, editors, and cookware specialists. Our mission is to test recipes over and over again until we understand how and why they work and until we arrive at the "best" version.

We start the process of testing a recipe with a complete lack of preconceptions, which means that we accept no claim, no technique, and no recipe at face value. We simply assemble as many variations as possible, test a half-dozen of the most promising, and taste the results blind. We then construct our own recipe and continue to test it, varying ingredients, techniques, and cooking times until we reach a consensus. As we like to say in the test kitchen, "We make the mistakes so you don't have to." The result, we hope, is the best version of a particular recipe, but we realize that only you can be the final judge of our success (or failure). We use the same rigorous approach when we test equipment and taste ingredients.

All of this would not be possible without a belief that good cooking, much like good music, is based on a foundation of objective technique. Some people like spicy foods and others don't, but there is a right way to sauté, there is a best way to cook a pot roast, and there are measurable scientific principles involved in producing perfectly beaten, stable egg whites. Our ultimate goal is to investigate the fundamental principles of cooking to give you the techniques, tools, and ingredients you need to become a better cook. It is as simple as that.

To see what goes on behind the scenes at America's Test Kitchen, check out our social media channels for kitchen snapshots, exclusive content, video tips, and much more. You can watch us work (in our actual test kitchen) by tuning in to *America's Test Kitchen* or *Cook's Country from America's Test Kitchen* on public television or on our websites. Listen in to *America's Test Kitchen Radio* ([ATKradio.com](http://ATKradio.com)) on public radio to hear insights that illuminate the truth about

real home cooking. Want to hone your cooking skills or finally learn how to bake—with an America’s Test Kitchen test cook? Enroll in one of our online cooking classes. If the big questions about the hows and whys of food science are your passion, join our Cook’s Science experts for a deep dive. However you choose to visit us, we welcome you into our kitchen, where you can stand by our side as we test our way to the best recipes in America.

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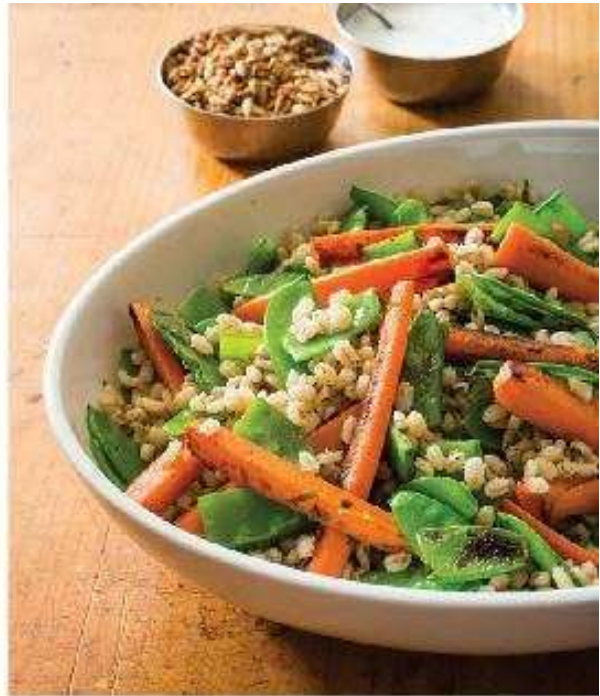
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Photos (clockwise from top left): Whole Roasted Snapper with Citrus Vinaigrette; Barley with Roasted Carrots, Snow Peas, and Lemon-Yogurt Sauce; Orange Polenta Cake; Shaved Mushroom and Celery Salad

# Introduction

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## **All About Olive Oil**

## THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

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The Mediterranean Sea is surrounded by an extraordinarily diverse group of countries: Italy, France, and Spain to the north, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria to the east, and to the south, the North African countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya. This means that there isn't a single "diet" that encompasses the entire Mediterranean region—the spice-laden dishes of Morocco bear little resemblance to the lemon- and caper-laced cuisine of southern Italy. Rather, the Mediterranean diet is about what these cuisines have in common: a daily emphasis on vegetables and fruits, beans and lentils, whole grains, more seafood than meat and poultry, and heart-healthy olive oil. This is the essence of the Mediterranean way of eating and was our overriding principle when deciding what to include in this book.

### The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

For guidelines we consulted the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid. The Pyramid was originally developed in the 1990s as part of a collaboration between the Harvard School of Public Health and Oldways, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire good health through cultural food traditions. The Pyramid was based on the outcome of the famous Seven Countries Study, which was begun in the late 1950s by an American physiologist named Ancel Keys. He found that the people of Crete tended to have lower incidences of coronary heart disease than participants in other countries, a fact that he attributed to their traditional diet, which was low in saturated fat and heavily reliant on vegetables, grains, and legumes. The Pyramid paved the way for the diet's popularity here in the United States, and it is a useful tool for anyone who is interested in eating this way. We wanted our recipes to follow the Pyramid and reflect the major tenets of the diet.

How did we do it? First, in the relative importance we've placed on each chapter. The most common elements of Mediterranean meals—fruits, vegetables, grains (mostly whole), olive oil, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices—form the base of the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, so one of the biggest chapters is devoted entirely to vegetables, another sizable chapter to

grains, and still another to legumes. Moving up the Pyramid, fish and seafood are prominent elements that are consumed often, at least two times per week, so that chapter also contains a huge selection of recipes. Further up are poultry, eggs, cheese, and yogurt, which are consumed in moderate amounts, daily to weekly, and at the top of the Pyramid are meats and sweets, which are consumed in relatively small quantities and least often. To reflect this, we've combined poultry and meat recipes into a single, moderately sized chapter. There is also a chapter for sweets, but you won't find chocolaty confections or towering cakes in it. In fact, you won't even find butter, which we've opted to leave out of the book altogether since it is high in saturated fat. What you will find are fresh fruit desserts and more modest treats, like [Greek Sesame-Honey Bars](#) and [White Wine-Poached Pears](#).

The Pyramid is also reflected in the dishes themselves. Small amounts of cheese and meat are often used as seasonings instead of main ingredients. Dishes aren't drowned in sauce but instead drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil or a yogurt- or tahini-based sauce to add flavor and richness. While many American dinner plates are centered around meat or chicken, Mediterranean meals are designed differently. Rather than being the centerpiece, meat is eaten in smaller quantities (in this book, a serving of fish, poultry, or meat is usually 4 to 6 ounces) with the intention that it will be paired with a few other—usually plant-based—dishes of equal portions, like fresh salads, vegetable and bean dishes, and whole grains. We've created some sample menus (see [here](#)) to help you start thinking about how to put together a Mediterranean meal.

Finally, we went to great lengths to make sure the recipes in this book were healthy. Since the original Seven Countries Study, countless studies have proven that the benefits of the Mediterranean diet go far beyond cardiovascular health—and, unlike most trendy diets, the health effects have been studied over the long term. You can hardly read the news without coming across an article detailing the findings of yet another study on the benefits of the Mediterranean diet. With its high amounts of vegetables and olive oil, which contains heart-healthy monounsaturated fats, the diet has been said to promote healthy blood sugar levels, improve cognitive function, and even prevent diseases like Alzheimer's and certain types of cancer. And while the Mediterranean diet isn't low in fat, some studies have found that people who eat this way do tend to weigh less and have improved body mass index, lower cholesterol, and lower

blood pressure. Other studies indicate that adhering to a Mediterranean diet results in better overall health, both physical and mental.

### Putting the Pyramid into Practice

So, with the help of the experts at Oldways, we established guidelines for ourselves limiting the amount of unhealthy saturated fats, salt, and calories. We focused on the interesting flavors of the ingredients and how to bring out their best qualities by using lots of herbs and spices and utilizing cooking techniques meant to do the same, like roasting, braising, and grilling. And we put nutritional information for every recipe in the back of the book.

But the real heart of the book is the food. No diet, no matter how healthy, is sustainable unless the food is satisfying and, dare we say, a bit exciting. Anyone who has been to the Mediterranean knows this food is both, and we wanted our recipes to reflect that. What makes our book different is that we've designed the recipes with the home cook in mind. Our recipes are authentic but accessible; you won't have to search for esoteric ingredients you'll never use again. Some recipes hew closely to the traditional recipes, and others use ingredients in ways that follow the diet but provide more options. We knew that we could wholeheartedly embrace the tenets of the Mediterranean diet while also translating its vibrant, healthy ingredients, smaller portion sizes, and less-meat-and-more-vegetables approach into interesting, appealing recipes.

## MEDITERRANEAN DIET PYRAMID



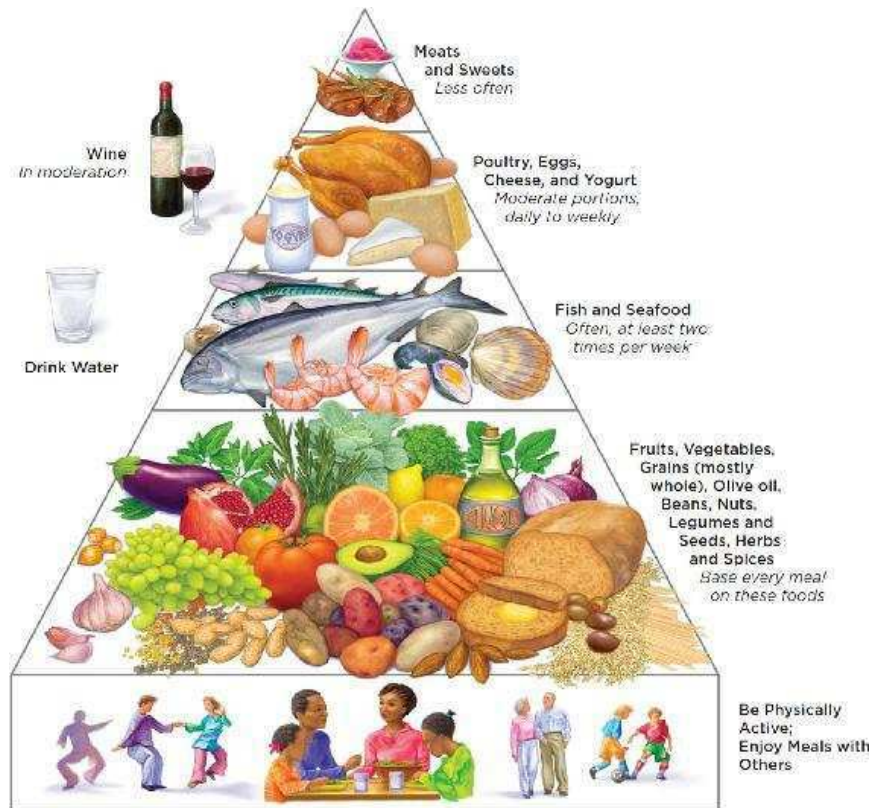


Illustration by George Middleton

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By combining ingredients in new and different ways, we produced incredible results: [Lemon-Dill Yogurt Cheese](#) was one of the simplest things we've ever made—just strain plain yogurt and stir in flavorings—but also decadently creamy, with a pleasant tang. A Macedonian dish of [Stewed Chickpeas with Eggplant and Tomatoes](#) incorporates simple ingredients we've used hundreds of times before into a complex and savory dish we couldn't stop eating. [Tagliatelle with Artichokes and Parmesan](#) relies completely on pantry staples—pasta, jarred artichokes, cheese, garlic, and lemon—and elevates them to new heights. [Braised Halibut with Leeks and Mustard](#), our appealing French-flavored one-pan meal, cooks the fish on top of the vegetables and then turns the cooking liquid into a sauce. These dishes are perfect for home cooks who want to incorporate more Mediterranean-style dishes into their regular dinner rotation; the ingredients and techniques are straightforward, but the combinations and the resulting flavors and textures are altogether fresh and inspired.

There's also a slew of authentic, slightly more involved recipes, from the