



Volunteer Leader Training Guide

Secrets of the Mediterranean Diet

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Target Audience

- Adults
- Older teens

Objectives

- Participants will be able to explain health benefits associated with following a traditional Mediterranean diet.
- Participants will be able to describe typical Mediterranean foods and lifestyle factors.
- Participants will be able to differentiate different types of olive oil and decide which type works best for different purposes.

Handouts

- **The Mediterranean Diet: Healthy Eating for Lifelong Good Health**, Handout 1
- **Olive Oil**, Handout 2
- **Olive Oil Tasting**, Handout 3
- **Mediterranean Recipes:** Hummus, White Bean Salad, Greek Salad, Briam (Summer Roasted Vegetables), Ham and Asparagus Frittata, Tuscan Salmon, Chicken Scaloppini with Capers and Lemons, Cherry Clafouti.
- **Evaluation**

Suggestions for Teaching the Lesson

- Review leader training guide, **The Mediterranean Diet: Healthy Eating for Lifelong Good Health** handout, **Olive Oil** handout and **Olive Oil Tasting** handout. Become familiar with the recipes and the healthy ingredients they contain.
- Make copies of the handouts, recipes and evaluation for each member.
- Have 3 different types of olive oil (Extra Virgin, Virgin, Olive or Lite) small cups and bread cubes prepared for olive oil tasting activity. Set up your Olive Oil station ahead of time as per the following instructions.

Conducting an Olive Oil Tasting

Supplies list:

- **Three different types of olive oils (Extra Virgin, Virgin, Olive or Lite).** We suggest selecting oils from your store that are easily accessible to participants.
- **Small plastic cups.** Enough for each participant to try each oil in its own cup (about 1 Tablespoon per cup). **Note:** Oil will soak through paper cups so plastic cups are recommended.
- **Water and water cups** for participants to cleanse their palates between oils.
- **Bread or tasting spoons for participants** to dip in oil to taste each variety.
- **“Olive Oil”** and **“Olive Oil Tasting”** handouts. Print one for each participant.
- **Disposable plates** so they can be used as trays for the participant to carry the oil and bread to their seats.
- **Pens or pencils** for participants to take notes about oils.

Setup:

1. Create an Olive Oil Tasting Station consisting of:
 - a. Plastic cups that are labeled by color or number filled with about 1 tablespoon of oil
 - b. A basket of small bread pieces and/or plastic spoons
 - c. Napkins
2. Have the oils grouped by type. Each type should have a color or number assigned to it, such as: extra virgin – green, virgin – red and olive oil – yellow.
3. Remember to hide the olive oil bottles to ensure a blind taste test.

Tasting Steps: Before tasting, discuss the different types of olive oil and their best uses.

1. Provide participants with the olive oil handouts and a pen or a pencil.
2. Make sure everyone has water to drink and cleanse palate.
3. Instruct participants on how to taste the oil, based on the instructions provided on the **“Olive Oil Tasting”** handout.
4. Provide the three samples to each participants, along with bread or a plastic spoon. The participants may sip directly from the cup, if they prefer.
5. Have the participants taste each oil and make notes on their tasting chart. Allow enough time for everyone to finish before you begin discussing opinions.

Outline or Main Teaching Points

- Set up Olive Oil Tasting Station beforehand, if conducting this activity.
- Start by asking club members if they have heard about the Mediterranean diet and, if so, can they describe what it is? Can they talk about the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet? Does anyone in the group try to follow a Mediterranean-style diet?
- Explain that the Mediterranean diet is a lifestyle approach to healthy eating that includes a balanced variety of foods and daily exercise. The diet is based on foods and beverages traditionally consumed by people living in countries along the Mediterranean Sea, especially Spain, Italy and Greece. (*Information is in Handout 1.*)

- Research (starting in the 1940s and continuing today) shows that following a Mediterranean diet can reduce the risk of:
 - Heart disease
 - Hypertension
 - Type 2 diabetes
 - Metabolic syndrome*
 - Stroke
 - Cancer
 - Alzheimer’s disease
 - Dementia
 - Abdominal obesity
- Mediterranean diet has also been linked to:
 - reduced blood pressure, triglycerides, blood sugar levels and inflammation
 - decreased insulin resistance
 - improved cholesterol levels
 - improved cognitive function in older adults
- Look at **The Mediterranean Diet: Healthy Eating for Lifelong Good Health** handout together and discuss the following:
 - Typical Mediterranean foods
 - Whole grains
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Beans, nuts and seeds
 - Healthy fats
 - Herbs and spices
 - Fish, seafood and poultry
 - Limit red and processed meats and sweets
 - Wine with meals
 - Relax
 - Get moving
 - Putting it all together with the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid
- Look at the **Olive Oil** handout together. Discuss the different grades: Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Virgin Olive Oil, Olive Oil and Lite Olive Oil and for what purpose each type will work best.
- Look at the **Olive Oil Tasting** handouts together. Discuss how to taste and rate each olive oil. Conduct the tasting activity. Give everyone time to complete the tasting on their own before sharing opinions as a group.
- Distribute the evaluations and instruct participants to fill them out completely. Tell them they will receive traditional Mediterranean recipes if they return evaluations completely filled out.
- Distribute recipes to participants who return completed evaluations.

*Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of conditions — increased blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the waist, and abnormal cholesterol or triglyceride levels — that occur together, increasing your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.