



— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN



THE COMPLETE
MEDITERRANEAN
COOKBOOK



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

ALSO BY THE EDITORS AT AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

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THE COMPLETE
MEDITERRANEAN
COOKBOOK

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

THE EDITORS AT
AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

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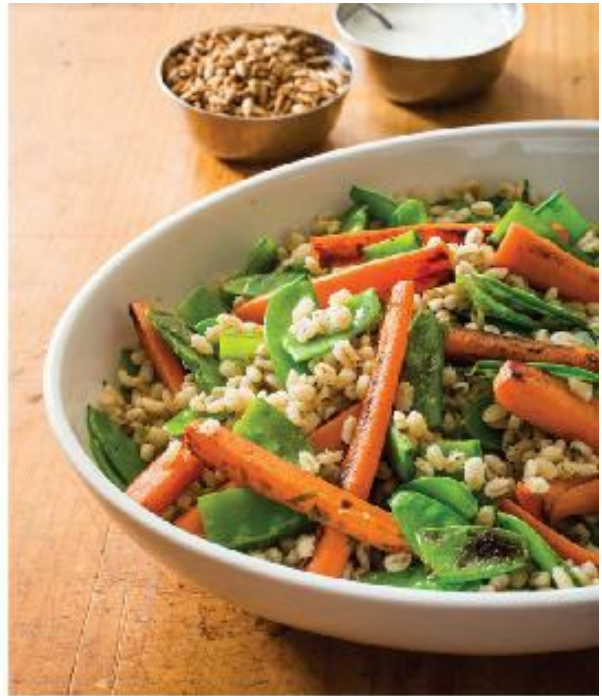
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Photos (clockwise from top left): Whole Roasted Snapper with Citrus Vinaigrette; Barley with Roasted Carrots, Snow Peas, and Lemon-Yogurt Sauce; Orange Polenta Cake; Shaved Mushroom and Celery Salad

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THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

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

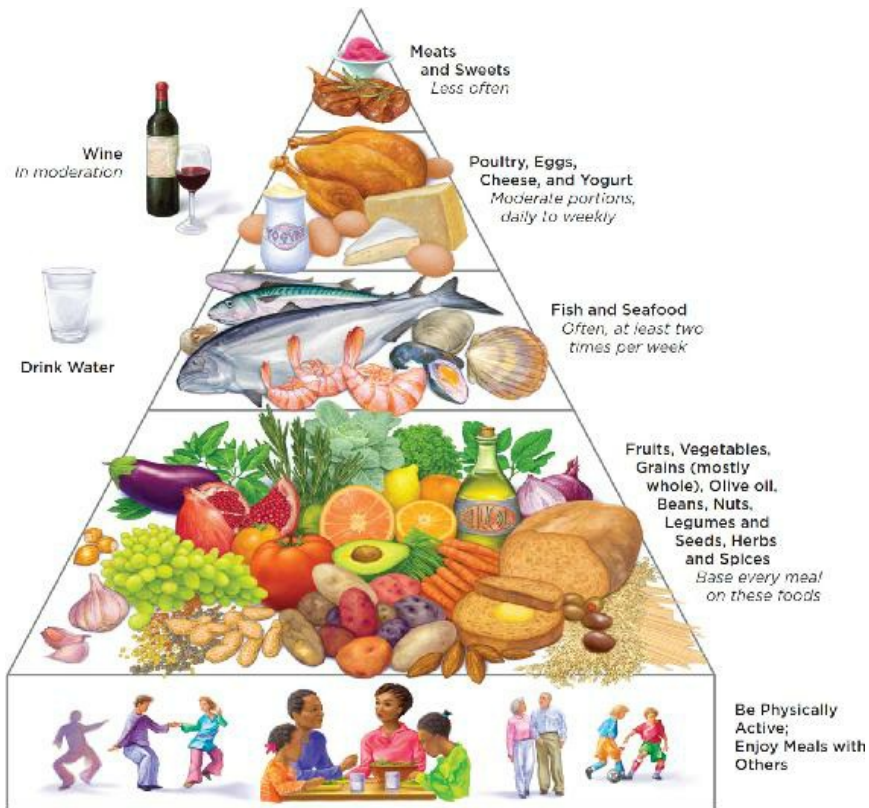


Illustration by George Middleton

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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

sweet-savory Moroccan tart known as [B'stilla](#), which tops layers of gently spiced chicken and delicate dough with cinnamon sugar (we used stacks of phyllo to replicate the texture of the traditional dough) to [Red Wine–Braised Octopus](#), a rich, Greek-style dish that coats tender octopus with a velvety red wine sauce (we parcook the octopus in water first to avoid a dish that's overly salty) to [Stuffed Grape Leaves](#), for which we turned to widely available jarred grape leaves (we show you, step by step, how to successfully roll them around our herb-enhanced rice filling). This book has something for everyone, whether you want to round out your favorite roast chicken with a flavorful grain salad or you're hoping to push the limits of your culinary knowledge with something completely new.

GETTING STARTED

Creating a Mediterranean Table

There is no denying that eating the Mediterranean way requires a shift in thinking: Portion sizes are smaller, less meat defines a serving size, and a meal often has several equally weighted dishes on the plate. The guidelines below are designed to help you put the diet into practice, and the menus that follow show interesting examples of ways to combine recipes for the full Mediterranean dining experience, whether you are creating a weeknight meal for your family or entertaining.

RETHINK YOUR PLATE

While you may normally decide on a central protein first and then choose a vegetable and a starch to accompany it, try choosing a vegetable or grain first. Instead of a main dish with sides, you will be serving more equal “small plates.” To this end, most of the recipes in this book are not intended to stand on their own; you’ll need one or two complementary dishes to round out a meal. You don’t necessarily need to make more dishes than you normally would—just approach the composition of the meal and your planning differently.

MODERATION IS KEY

No matter what you’re eating, make sure to moderate your intake. Portions are smaller in the Mediterranean diet, and the yields of our recipes reflect that. A pound of pasta serves six people, not four, and pieces of chicken and meat are in the 4- to 6-ounce range and may be highlighted by a small amount of a light and flavorful sauce. A Mediterranean-style meal is composed of appropriate portions of multiple dishes.

EAT WHAT’S FRESH AND IN SEASON

Eat lots of vegetables and fruits every day. Much of Mediterranean meal planning is based on what vegetables are available and celebrates seasonality. By figuring out what is seasonal and local, you will get better-quality produce that is worthy of being the centerpiece of a meal. Farmers’ markets are an excellent source of inspiration. If fresh produce isn’t available, we’ve found that there are certain substitutes that are of reliable quality year-round, such as jarred artichokes, varieties of small tomatoes like cherry and grape, and frozen fava beans and peas.

EAT BEANS AND WHOLE GRAINS EVERY DAY

Since meat and poultry are used more sparingly in the Mediterranean, beans, lentils, nuts, and whole grains are major sources of daily protein. They can be the starring ingredient in soups and stews, salads, and heartier dishes when combined with meat or fish but they can also play a supporting role in vegetable and pasta dishes. Whole grains contain a number of key nutrients, such as antioxidants, but note that not all Mediterranean grains are whole grains (see [here](#)).

EAT MORE FISH AND LESS RED MEAT

Consuming fresh seafood has long been important in the countries along the Mediterranean Sea. The health benefits of eating fish and shellfish include that they are low in calories and saturated fat and rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Some Mediterranean fish aren't well known in the United States, but there are available substitutes for most of them (see [here](#)). Fish like sardines and mackerel have the added benefit of being less expensive than many other types of fresh fish. Fish can be pan-roasted, baked, broiled, braised, and grilled and doesn't always have to be an entrée. It can be served as a starter ([Provençal-Style Anchovy Dip](#) and [Chili-Marinated Calamari with Oranges](#)), as part of a composed salad ([Salade Niçoise](#), and [Fennel and Apple Salad with Smoked Mackerel](#)), in soups ([Provençal Fish Soup](#), and [Shellfish Soup with Leeks and Turmeric](#)), and in pasta dishes ([Spaghetti with Clams and Roasted Tomatoes](#), and [Orzo with Shrimp, Feta, and Lemon](#)).

USE MEAT AS A FLAVORING

Dishes that contain small amounts of meat are common throughout the Mediterranean, since traditionally this was a way to stretch pricey meat further by combining it with less expensive grains or beans. We implemented this idea in creating dishes such as [Bulgur with Herbed Lamb and Roasted Red Peppers](#) and [Orzo with Greek Sausage and Spiced Yogurt](#). We made use of more flavorful cuts of meat, such as lamb shanks and shoulder chops, and cured meats like Italian pancetta, Spanish chorizo, and the Turkish sausage *sujuk*, so that a smaller amount would have a big impact.

SERVE FRESH FRUIT AND CAREFULLY CHOSEN SWEETS FOR DESSERT

It is customary in many parts of the region to have a piece of fresh fruit as the ending to a meal. Cakes and cookies are not eaten on a daily basis but are often saved for special family gatherings and celebrations. In keeping with the diet's emphasis on low amounts of saturated fat, we replaced the butter in our cakes, cookies, and pastries with olive oil, but we still wanted to achieve satisfying sweets that would be worthy of serving to guests. This required us to overcome a few challenges; for example, when it came to phyllo-based desserts like [Baklava](#) and [Fig Phyllo Cookies](#), replacing the butter with olive oil was not as easy as a one-for-one substitution.

EMBRACE VARIETY

Balance and diversity are hallmarks of Mediterranean meals, so try to serve an array of dishes with different tastes, textures, and temperatures. Many dishes taste great whether they are warm, at room temperature, or even cold out of the fridge.

This helps to reduce the pressure to get a completely hot meal on the table. As you can see from our sample menus (see [here](#)), it is easy to mix and match recipes.

MEDITERRANEAN MEAL PLANNING

To help you start thinking about putting the Mediterranean diet into practice, we've compiled a list of recipes that we think work well together and are suitable for busy weeknights. When you have more time, the suggestions on the opposite page show you how to combine small plates and main courses for larger gatherings or special celebrations.



WEEKNIGHT PAIRINGS

Pan-Roasted Halibut with Chermoula
Braised Asparagus, Peas, and Radishes with Tarragon

Lemon-Herb Hake Fillets with Garlic Potatoes
Sautéed Cherry Tomatoes

Orzo with Shrimp, Feta, and Lemon
Green Bean Salad with Cilantro Sauce

Za'atar-Rubbed Butterflied Chicken
Sautéed Swiss Chard with Currants and Pine Nuts

Grilled Chicken Kebabs with Tomato-Feta Salad
Simple Pearl Couscous with Radishes and Watercress

Flank Steak Peperonata
Warm Farro with Lemon and Herbs

Spice-Rubbed Pork Tenderloin with Fennel, Tomatoes, Artichokes, and Olives
Creamy Parmesan Polenta

Tagliatelle with Artichokes and Parmesan
Tricolor Salad with Balsamic Vinaigrette

Bulgur with Herbed Lamb and Roasted Red Peppers
Spicy Roasted Carrots with Cilantro

Stewed Chickpeas with Eggplant and Tomatoes
Zucchini Ribbon Salad with Shaved Parmesan

ENTERTAINING MENUS

SPRING

Mussels Escabèche
Artichoke-Lemon Hummus with Lavash Crackers
Fava Beans with Artichokes, Asparagus, and Peas
Spanish-Style Brothy Rice with Clams and Salsa Verde
Olive Oil-Yogurt Cake

SUMMER

Chili-Marinated Calamari with Oranges
Shaved Mushroom and Celery Salad
Grilled Swordfish Skewers with Tomato-Scallion Caponata
Bulgur Salad with Grapes and Feta
Nectarines and Berries in Prosecco

FALL

Broiled Feta with Olive Oil and Parsley
Garlic and Rosemary White Bean Dip with Olive Oil-Sea Salt Pita Chips
Lentil Salad with Carrots and Cilantro
Greek-Style Braised Pork with Leeks
Almond Cake

VEGETARIAN

Spicy Whipped Feta with Roasted Red Peppers
Stuffed Grape Leaves
Vegetable Paella
Arugula Salad with Fennel and Shaved Parmesan
Baklava

WINTER

Prosciutto-Wrapped Stuffed Dates
Pan-Fried Halloumi with Garlic-Parsley Sauce

Citrus Salad with Arugula, Golden Raisins, and Walnuts
Roasted Celery Root with Yogurt and Sesame Seeds
Paniscia
Roasted Apples with Dried Figs and Walnuts

HOLIDAY

Skordalia with crudités
Beet Tzatziki or Provençal-Style Anchovy Dip with Olive Oil–Sea Salt Pita Chips
Bitter Greens Salad with Olives and Feta
Freekeh Salad with Butternut Squash, Walnuts, and Raisins
Roast Butterflied Leg of Lamb with Coriander, Cumin, and Mustard Seeds
Orange Polenta Cake

A FRESH LOOK AT YOUR PANTRY



While we used lots of familiar ingredients like chicken, swordfish, couscous, and chickpeas across this book, we also investigated less familiar ingredients and developed recipes for grains like freekeh and farro, beans like cranberry and fava, meats like oxtails and quail, and seafood like monkfish and squid. We learned how to work with finicky ingredients like grape leaves and phyllo dough and flavor builders like sumac, preserved lemons, and pomegranate molasses. You'll find plenty of information on these items throughout the book. What you won't find here, however, are ingredients that aren't native to the Mediterranean region, like quinoa and salmon. Below is information about core pantry ingredients used throughout the book.

CANNED AND DRIED BEANS Legumes are a major source of protein in the Mediterranean diet. They are eaten simply on their own and also paired with diverse other ingredients to add heft and texture, such as [Whole-Wheat Spaghetti with Lentils, Pancetta, and Escarole](#) and [Shrimp with White Beans](#). For salads, quicker-cooking soups, and sautés, we've found that canned beans work just as well as or even better than dried; they hold their shape nicely and don't require soaking or extended cooking. We use dried beans in recipes where the cooking of the beans builds body and flavor in the dish such as [Hearty Tuscan Bean Stew](#) and [Moroccan Braised White Beans with Lamb](#). We have found that brining dried beans helps them to hold their shape during cooking and results in fewer blown-out beans (see [here](#)). Fava beans are one of the only beans that are more frequently used fresh than dried or canned; see [here](#) for more information.

RICE AND GRAINS Rice and grains are a vital part of many Mediterranean dishes, from verdant [Spanish-Style Brothy Rice](#) to savory [Creamy Parmesan Polenta](#) to multi-textured [Egyptian Barley Salad](#). In the test kitchen, we determined the best way to cook each grain; grains like farro are best when cooked in a large amount of water like pasta, but finer-grained bulgur needs only to be rehydrated in water. At least half of the grains you eat should be whole grains (those that retain their original kernel); we use barley, bulgur, farro, freekeh, and wheat berries in this book. For more information about rice and other grains, see [here](#) and [here](#).

PASTA AND COUSCOUS Pasta takes center stage in many Mediterranean dishes but is often used in ways unfamiliar to most American home cooks, as in [Rigatoni with Warm-Spiced Beef Ragu](#), which gets its distinctive flavor from cinnamon and cloves. In this book, we also use hearty whole-wheat pasta, which has an earthy flavor that we pair with robust ingredients like pancetta and escarole. In North Africa, couscous, which is made of the same type of wheat as pasta, is popular both as a vehicle to sop up saucy dishes and stews and as a small plate in its own right, as in [Couscous with Lamb, Chickpeas, and Orange](#). Eastern Mediterranean cuisines often use pearl couscous; its grains are larger than those of regular couscous and are toasted rather than dried, which gives them a nutty flavor perfectly suited for dishes like [Hearty Pearl Couscous with Eggplant, Spinach, and Beans](#). For more information on pasta and couscous, see [here](#) and [here](#).

OLIVES AND OLIVE OIL If there is one ingredient that is the emblem of Mediterranean cooking, it is olives. Of course they are best known for their use in olive oil (see [here](#)). There are countless varieties of eating olives, from French niçoise to Greek kalamata.

Test Kitchen Tip We recommend buying olives from the refrigerated section of your supermarket, since jarred shelfstable ones tend to be saltier. If you have time, we recommend that you buy unpitted olives and pit them yourself, as they will be less mushy than prepitted ones. To pit olives, place an olive on the counter and hold the flat edge of a knife over it. Press the blade firmly with your hand to loosen the olive meat from the pit, then remove the pit with your fingers.