



Media Release

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Leading Australian dietitian Karen Inge applauds inclusion of Herbs and Spices to the traditional food pyramid

Leading Australian dietitian Karen Inge* APD has applauded the decision by the US creator of the international food pyramid to include **herbs and spices** within the essential frame for good nutritional health.

The Oldways organisation based in the US is a widely-respected non-profit "food issues think tank" and is best known for developing consumer-friendly health-promotion tools, including the well-known [Mediterranean Diet Pyramid](#).

In 1993, [Oldways](#) launched a Mediterranean nutritional pyramid, fashioned on the idea of the US government's dietary pyramid. The pyramid was supported by the Harvard School of Public Health and the World Health Organisation.

The Boston-based non-profit organisation has recently revised its 1993 pyramid, with new recommendations including grains, 'mostly whole', and **herbs and spices** have been added to Oldways' Mediterranean nutritional pyramid, as the diet gets an update based on the science.

According to the updated pyramid, every meal should be based on plant foods including fruits, vegetables, grains (mostly whole), beans, seeds, nuts, **herbs and spices**, and olive oil.

"The inclusion of herbs and spices within healthy eating guidelines such as the food pyramid has been high on the agenda for many Australian dietitians for several years now," say Karen Inge APD.

"Research shows that using herbs and spices in your cooking is an excellent way to boost your daily antioxidant intake, helping to build your body's defences, boost your immune system and maximise your wellbeing."

"Antioxidants protect the body's cells against lifestyle conditions, working in the body to mop up free radicals, the damaging by-products of our modern lifestyle released during metabolism and other physiological body functions," says Inge.

The Mediterranean diet, rich in cereals, wine, fruits, nuts, legumes and whole grains, fish and olive oil, and low in dairy, meat, junk food and fat, has been linked to longer life, less heart disease, and protection against some cancers. The diet's main nutritional components include beta-carotene, vitamin C, tocopherols, polyphenols, and essential minerals.

The Mediterranean style of eating first appeared as a nutritional concept in the 1990's, but it is only in recent years that it has started to take a hold in the Australian and US dietary recommendations

"With obesity and diet-related chronic diseases at an all-time high, we felt it was important to review the hundreds of new scientific studies that join the archive of high-level research on the healthfulness of eating a Mediterranean-style diet, and update the pyramid," said Frank Sacks, MD, from Harvard School of Public Health and Harvard Medical School, and co-chair of the scientific committee.

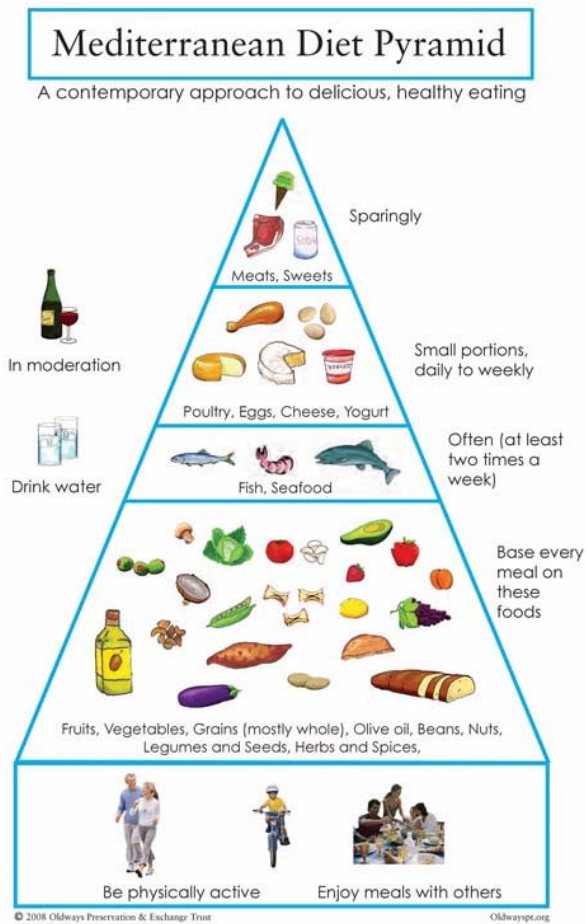
"These studies suggest that healthy diet and lifestyle practices, like those associated with the Mediterranean Diet, can reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and more," he added.

According to Oldways the addition of [herbs and spices](#) is to "reflect new research on their health benefits as well as their dominant role in Mediterranean flavour profile."

At least two portions of fish per week are now recommended, while old recommendations for eating meats and sweets sparingly are still in place.

Another addition to the pyramid is the recommendation to drink water regularly, in place of less healthy beverages.

The original Oldways copyrighted pyramid developed in 1993 has appeared over the last 15 years in millions of impressions in nutrition books, newspapers, magazines and television, and has even been licensed for use on some food products.



The new Mediterranean food pyramid as proposed by Oldways Preservation Trust, Boston USA.

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