

## Educational kit

### OUR DIET: FROM ANTIQUITY TO TODAY

#### THE PROJECT

The educational kit **OUR DIET: FROM ANTIQUITY TO TODAY** includes photographs, videos and activities about the diet of the ancient Greeks and Romans.

The lesson plans are part of **Foodprint**, a cross-media project about the Mediterranean Diet, exploring why this age-old food tradition is relevant to our lives today. It connects Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Croatia and Cyprus –the countries where UNESCO has recognized the Mediterranean Diet as part of humanity’s Intangible Heritage. Five European photographers traveled to these countries to capture a food tradition practiced across the Mediterranean for centuries, which brings alive a history of sustainability, health and cultural exchange.

The aim of the Foodprint educational kit is for students to **understand the role of food in history and our daily lives**, how the Mediterranean has historically been a region of cultural exchange between East and West and why a plant-based diet, as eaten in antiquity and across the centuries, is the most healthy for our bodies and for the planet.

The project photographs are available for educational use on the project website: [www.foodprint-project.com](http://www.foodprint-project.com). They include 90 images grouped in five themes: **survive, provide, cook, eat** and **sustain**. The images are accompanied by texts from historians, archaeologists, dieticians, farmers and cooks and by additional historical archive images.

#### THE EDUCATIONAL KIT IN A GLANCE

LESSON PLANS	1. A Daily Meal in Ancient Greece 2. A Daily Meal in Ancient Rome
FOR AGES	12-15
DURATION	1 teaching hour each
SUBJECT AREAS	History, Visual Arts
EQUIPMENT	PC connected to a large screen or projector, with loudspeakers Internet connection Printer for the Student Handouts

# 1. A Daily Meal in Ancient Greece

## Part 1. What is the Mediterranean Diet?

In ancient Athens and Rome, food was based on cereals (wheat and barley), olives, and grapes/wine. Many foods we eat today in the Mediterranean, such as aubergines, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, lemons, oranges, pomelos, and corn, were unknown in antiquity.

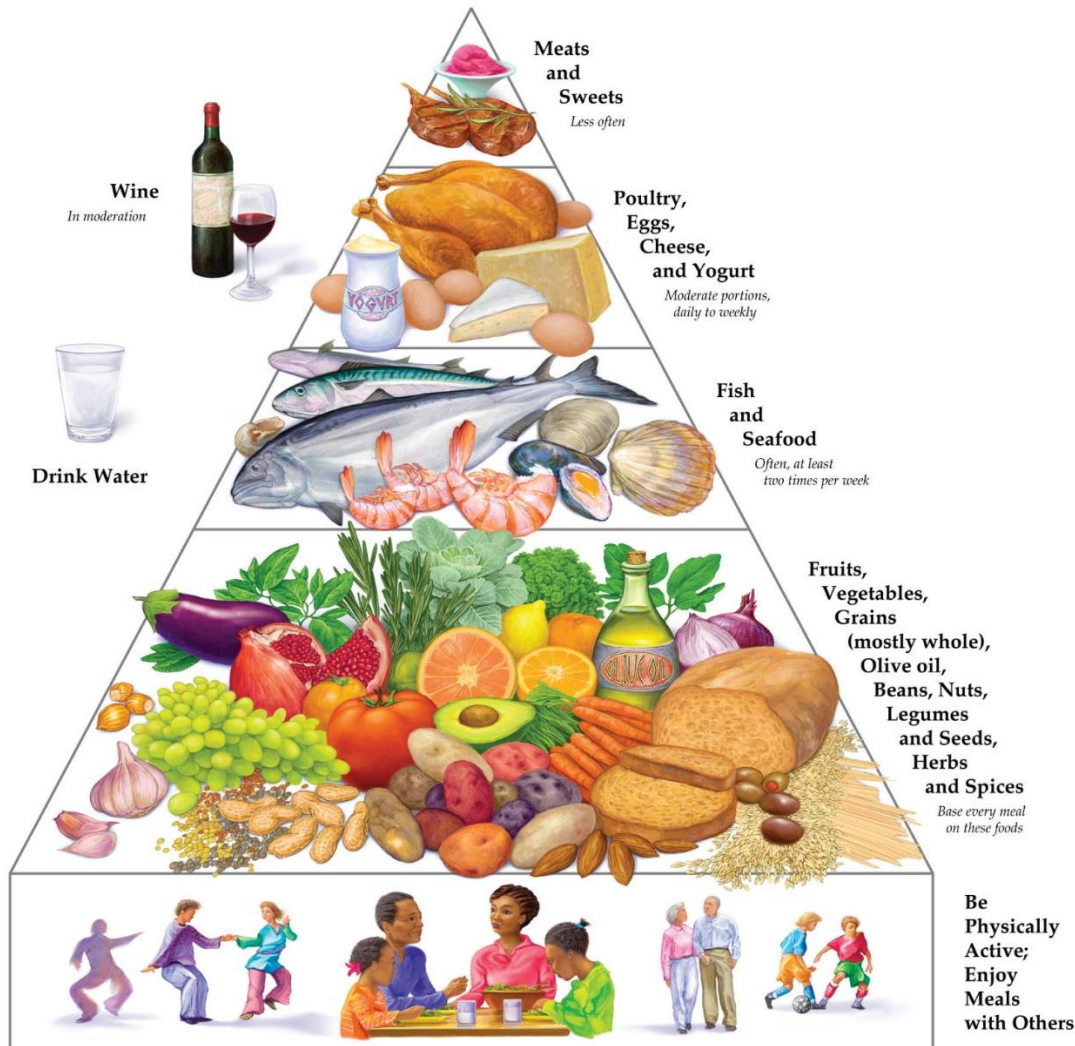


Illustration by George Middleton

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The Mediterranean diet pyramid was developed based on the eating habits of long-living adults in the Mediterranean. It follows a general food pyramid guideline (not specific quantities) and encourages communal eating and an active lifestyle.

It is associated with:

- Reduced risk of memory problems and dementia<sup>1</sup>
- Reduced risk of stroke, diabetes, and other vascular diseases<sup>2</sup>

### Base every meal around:

- Vegetables and fruits (the darker in color, the more anti-oxidants!)
- Legumes/beans, whole grains, nuts (e.g., lentils, walnuts)
- Olive oil as principal source of fat (swap out margarine and butter!)

### Eat at least 2x/week:

- Fish, seafood

### Eat moderate portions daily to weekly:

- Poultry
- Dairy, cheese and eggs
- Red wine (typically with meals)
  - ♦ Females: 1 glass/day
  - ♦ Males: 2 glasses/day

### Eat less often than other foods:

- Red meat
- Saturated fat
- Sweets

## Part 2. Daily Meals in Ancient Greece

WATCH SHORT FILM about food in Ancient Athens:

▶ [PLAY THE VIDEO](#)

The diet of ancient Greeks was based primarily on cereals, vegetables, legumes, fruits, oil, dairy products and fish.

Written sources tell us the names of the different meals:

**Breakfast** was called *akratisma* and often consisted of bread (barley bread for the poor, wheat bread for the rich) dipped in wine. This practice has survived in many rural areas in Greece as this kind of breakfast provides the energy necessary for agricultural work, which requires strength and stamina. Occasionally, breakfast was more varied and included goat's milk, olives, figs, and dried nuts.

**Lunch**, known as *ariston*, was a simple meal. The family ate together and enjoyed simple foods, such as olives, cheese, and fruit.

**Supper**, the last meal of the day, was called *esperisma*. The family ate alone or with guests. It consisted of greens, legumes, onions, garlic, olives, cheese, fish and bread (maza).

Maza was made of either coarsely or finely ground barley mixed with water, milk, and oil to form a dough, which was then left to dry. It was soaked in water before serving and was eaten with onions and other vegetables.

Wine accompanied the food. Meat was rarely consumed in antiquity as it was expensive and not considered essential. Fish was a favourite dish, but only the rich could afford to buy it fresh; everyone else ate it salted. Various pastries, fruit, honey, and nuts were served after dinner.

**DISCUSS:** HOW DOES A DAILY MEAL IN ANTIQUITY DIFFER FROM WHAT WE EAT TODAY?

### Part 3. Meat consumption was not as common in antiquity as it is today.

WATCH SHORT FILM about meat consumption in antiquity:

▶ [PLAY THE VIDEO](#)

**LOOK & READ:** <https://foodprint-project.com/photographs/jacopo>  
<https://foodprint-project.com/archive/sacrifice>

Cooks appear to have come into existence in the late archaic period. Cookery in Athens and other Greek cities of the classical period had become a recognised art or skill (techne) and cooks were freelance, remunerated tradesmen. Professional cooks (mageiroi) were typically free men rather than slaves. Chosen by reputation, recommendation or price, they were not required every day, but only at a dinner party or sacrifice. They helped select a sacrificial animal, sacrifice it, prepared the meal that followed, and resold the meat that was not consumed. In Rome, cookery became a slave profession as large Roman establishments, from imperial households downwards, needed cooks every day.

Andrew Dalby, linguist and historian

#### **DISCUSS:** WHY DID THE ANCIENT ATHENIANS EAT MEAT SO RARELY?

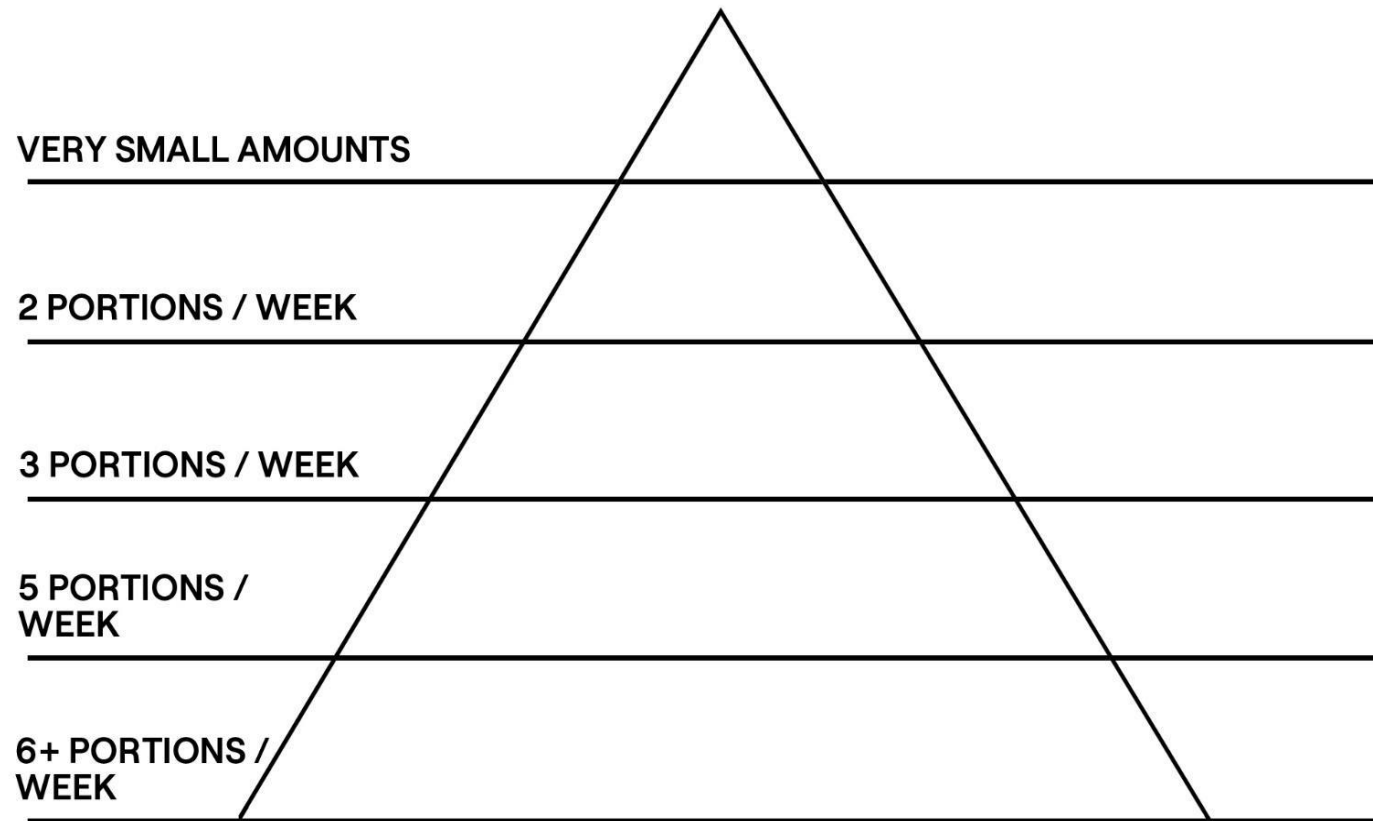
- Can you think of an occasion in your country/region where meat is eaten in the context of a religious ritual or celebration?
  - One interviewee in the video said that “if we go to mechanised slaughter houses we are horrified at the industrial practices of the killing and butchering of animals because the way it's done is offensive to many of us.” Do you feel the same way? Would you like that to change and how?
  - How often do you eat meat? Have you thought about decreasing your consumption of meat?
- Can you identify which is the most important reason why you would do so?
- The inhumane treatment of animals?
  - Your own health?
  - The health of the planet?

### Part 3. Draw your own pyramid

Draw and fill in your own food pyramid.

Calculate what you eat during a week.

Make sure you differentiate between wholemeal and processed grains, fresh and processed foods.



#### DISCUSS:

DESCRIBE YOUR PYRAMIDS

COMPARE WITH EACH OTHER & WITH THE MED DIET PYRAMID

GO THROUGH THE HEALTHY EATING PLATE IN THE NEXT PAGE



# HEALTHY EATING PLATE

Use healthy oils (like olive and canola oil) for cooking, on salad, and at the table. Limit butter. Avoid trans fat.



The more veggies – and the greater the variety – the better. Potatoes and French fries don't count.

Eat plenty of fruits of all colors.



**STAY ACTIVE!**

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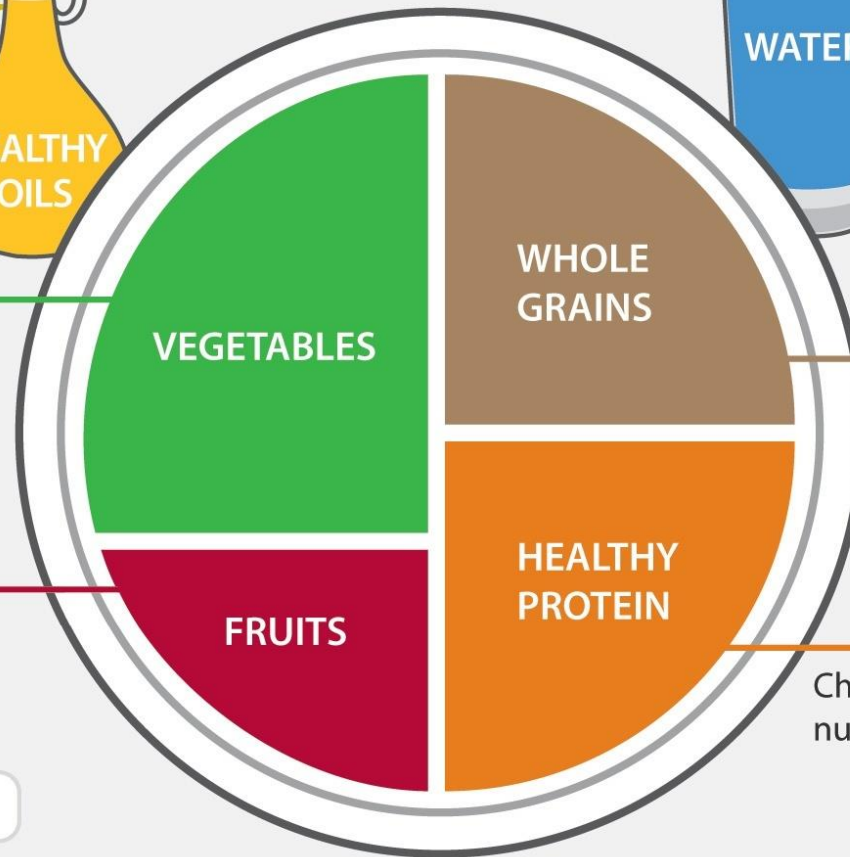
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health  
The Nutrition Source  
[www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource)



Drink water, tea, or coffee (with little or no sugar). Limit milk/dairy (1-2 servings/day) and juice (1 small glass/day). Avoid sugary drinks.

Eat a variety of whole grains (like whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, and brown rice). Limit refined grains (like white rice and white bread).

Choose fish, poultry, beans, and nuts; limit red meat and cheese; avoid bacon, cold cuts, and other processed meats.



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