



# Savour

## the Mediterranean

*Take fresh ingredients from the Mediterranean Sea and its lands to create a diet which as Brooke Wells discovers holds the key to longevity*

Adopt a Mediterranean diet and take advantage of the health benefits – and a longer life - the diet is renowned for. Add to this some Australian flair and it's easy to adopt the Mediterranean diet to our Australian lifestyle says Maria Benardis, chef and founder of cooking school Greekalicious.

"There are simple changes that you can incorporate into your daily routine that will change your health for the better.

"The first step is to throw out all the bad oils and to replace them with extra virgin olive oil. Confine meat dishes to no more than twice a week. Have every ingredient in the form nature intended. And remember that everything in moderation is the secret to a healthy and long life!!!"

She says the traditional Mediterranean diet includes a balanced combination of locally grown fruits and vegetables that are consumed raw or with little processing, a huge amount of seafood, small portions of lean red meat and large amounts of olive oil.

This is in line with findings from a recent study from the Harvard School of Public Health which found that when there was not a high intake of vegetables, a low intake of red meat and a moderate intake of alcohol, the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet were substantially reduced. This is because the fat sources within these foods contain monounsaturated fats and omega 3 fatty acids which lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and high levels of antioxidants that prevent artery clogging, unlike saturated fats found in refined sugar, flour and butter.

Saturated fats are rarely used in Mediterranean dishes and are instead substituted with spices and herbs instead. "Herbs and spices are the best way to add flavour to dishes without the added calories," Benardis says.

Common herbs and spices used in Mediterranean dishes include masticha, saffron, cumin, nutmeg, pepper, star anise, cinnamon, cloves, basil, parsley, mint, dill, rosemary, oregano, thyme and coriander and salt is used less frequently.

Sixteen countries border the Mediterranean Sea, but the main Mediterranean diet is primarily based on the food sources of the olive grove regions of Southern Europe. Variations of the diet in Northern Africa and the Middle East do include many of the foods from these countries but it is the consumption of native fruits, vegetables, pulses, lentils, legumes and non refined grains grown in Italy, Greece, Spain and France that deliver the diet's health benefits. These include lower incidences of chronic diseases like coronary heart disease, Parkinsons, Alzheimers and some cancers, as well as higher life expectancy rates in all of these populations. ♥

## Prawn Souvlaki

### Ingredients

16 small skewers  
16 uncooked King Prawns  
1 tablespoon chopped continental parsley or coriander

### Ladolemon dressing

3 tablespoons extra virgin Greek olive oil  
6 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
A pinch of dried oregano  
Salt and pepper to taste



### Method

1. Place all the ingredients for the ladolemon dressing in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Seal and shake until well blended.
2. Place the souvlaki skewers in some water so they can soak for at least 2 hours. This will ensure they do not burn when the souvlakia are cooked. Devein and remove the shell from the Prawns. Pass each Prawn through a skewer. Heat an oiled grilling tray or a BBQ and wipe the plates with some olive oil. Brush each Prawn on both sides with some of the ladolemono dressing and place on the grilling plate or BBQ. Cook for approximately 1 minute on each side until the Prawns turn pink.
3. Place them on a serving platter and brush them with a little more dressing. Remember to shake the dressing occasionally so that all the ingredients are well blended. Garnish with the parsley or coriander.

*Recipe provided courtesy of Maria Benardis, Founder of Greekalicious.*