

# Celebrate Mediterranean Diet Month



**Megan Lassiter**  
Guest columnist

Ready to enjoy a way of eating that is great tasting, satisfying, and good for you? Then the simple and delicious Mediterranean way of eating may be right for you. A Mediterranean-style diet is a plant-based food plan full of delicious and affordable foods that are low in cholesterol and saturated fats and high in fiber and omega-3 fatty acids.

Join NC Cooperative Extension in celebrating Med Month by using the recipes, life hacks, and more from <https://medinsteadofmeds.com/>.

Med Instead of Meds is a program and set of resources created by NC State Extension and the NC Division of Public Health to educate and provide tools that assist with eating the Med Way. Eating like those who live in the Mediterranean region has been shown to promote health. The Mediterranean-Diet has been extensively studied and is associated with promoting health and decreasing the risk of many chronic diseases including some forms of cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

#### Steps to Eating the Med Way:

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Replace red meat with plant proteins and lean proteins, such as beans, legumes, chicken breast, etc.
- Choose whole-grain foods such as oatmeal, quinoa, brown rice, and popcorn often.
- Snack on three ounces of nuts and seeds per week.
- Swap the solid fats like butter and margarine in your diet for olive oil.
- Use herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor



**Salmon fillet with lentils and carrots.**

COURTESY OF RICHARD SEMIK, PHB.CZ - FOTOLIA

foods.

- Enjoy seafood at least three times per week.
- Be physically active. Aim for at least 150 minutes per week.
- Drink red wine (this is optional).
- Limit yourself to no more than three servings per week of sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages.

Ready to see if the Mediterranean-Style Diet works for you? Last winter the Family and Consumer Sciences program offered the program to over 100 participants in New Hanover and Brunswick County. If you are interested in learning more about the program or being added to the wait list contact Meghan Lassiter, [meghan\\_lassiter@ncsu.edu](mailto:meghan_lassiter@ncsu.edu).

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## Lentils with cumin vinaigrette

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup green, brown, or red lentils
- 2 cups water or vegetable stock

#### Cumin vinaigrette:

- 1 large shallot, finely chopped.
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Pinch cayenne

Salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions:

Place the vegetable stock or water in a pot with the lentils.

Cook over high heat until it comes to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cover. Cook until lentils are tender but not mushy—15 minutes to one hour depending on the type and size of lentil. Drain and place in a bowl.

Make the vinaigrette by heating the oil in a small skillet. Add the shallots and cook on medium heat for one minute. Add the cumin and cook for one more minute.

Remove from heat and add the vinegar, cayenne, salt and pepper. Add the warm lentils and stir.

Serving size ½ cup. Serves 4. Contains 2 grams of fiber, 8 grams of protein, and 13 grams of fat. Find this at [www.youtube.com/channel/UC...](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)