

Concurrent Session 16

Search for the original Mediterranean diet(s)

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Eighteen countries have coasts on the Mediterranean Sea, all with different diets. But the ideal diet for today's nutritionists seems to be what Italians and Greeks were eating as their countries started to recover from being battlefields in World War II. It would be helpful to have these diets for reference in quantitative terms.

In Italy individual intakes were measured by the Seven Country Study team at three sites in 1960 and 1961. NICOTERA is a small seaside town on the toe of Italy. MONTEGIORGIO (farming community) is in the middle of Italy, 20 km above the Adriatic coast. CREVALCORE up north is in the Po valley, near Bolonga. Only a small survey was done in Nicotera, though it is the most Mediterranean site. More measurements were made at the central and northern sites. Intakes (only for men) were first published (1964) as percent total calories from food groups. Foods in g/day were not published until 1989 (for men), only for Montegiorgio and Crevalcore.² Food figures (g/day) for Nicotera, (men and women) appear in a paper Flaminio Fidanza gave in London in 1991.² In these 3 surveys by Keys *et al.*, much more meat and milk was consumed in Crevalcore, more vegetables and cereals in Nicotera. The Euratom household consumption study in the early 1960s also reported that north Italians ate more meat, milk and butter and less fruits, vegetables and olive oil than in the south.

In Greece, Keys *et al.*, measured food intakes, only on the islands of CRETE and CORFU. Crete was still very poor after the War. A large case study of Crete as an underdeveloped area had been made by Allbaugh in 1948.³ Their household diet records give good descriptions of the Cretan diet at that time. 1960 food intake records in Crete and Corfu by Keys *et al.*, were lost but Kromhout & Bloemberg (2002) reconstructed the general characteristics, expressed in g/day of food groups for men.⁴ Food intakes were measured at a sixth Mediterranean site by the Seven Country team in 1960, in Dalmatia, now coastal Croatia. Data for men for these six Mediterranean cohorts of 45 years ago are collected in the table, together with Australia (1995).

| | Nicotera 1960 | Monte giorgio 1960 | Creval core 1960 | Australia 1995 | Crete 1960 | Corfu 1960 | Dalmatia 1960 |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| Total cereals incl bread | 488 | 529 | 498 | 404 | 410 | 495 | 499 |
| Potatoes | | 56 | 30 | | 190 | 150 | 214 |
| Legumes | 49 | 21 | 5 | 12 | 30 | 30 | 7 |
| Vegetables | 344 | 194 | 140 | 283 | 191 | 191 | 200 |
| Fruit | 101 | 28 | 190 | 141 | 464 | 462 | 6 |
| Meat | 53 | 85 | 154 | 199 | 35 | 35 | 117 |
| Fish | 42 | 35 | 22 | 28 | 18 | 60 | 96 |
| Milk | 33 | 8 | 313 | 233 | 235 | 70 | 434 |
| Cheese | 15 | 9 | 24 | 16 | 13 | 14 | 4 |
| Olive oil | 46 | 24 | 32 | | 95 | 75 | 72 |

References

1. Kromhout D, Keys A, Arvanis C, Buzina R, Fidanza F, et al. Food consumption patterns in the 1960s in seven countries. *Am J Clin Nutr* 1989; 49: 889-894.
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3. Allbaugh LG. Crete: a case study of an underdeveloped area. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953.
4. Kromhout D, Bloemberg B. Diet and coronary heart disease in the Seven Country Study. In Kromhout D, et al (eds) *Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease. Diet, lifestyle and risk factors in the Seven Country Study*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer, 2002; 44-70.