

Mediterranean diet a good choice for kids, too

Q My husband and I are trying to follow the Mediterranean eating plan. Is it OK for our 10- and 17-year-olds to also follow? — MJ, Ayden

A Congrats on following a healthy eating plan. It's an even better idea to have your whole family do so. I asked Ericka Rodriguez, an ECU senior dietetic student, to answer your question. Here is what she wants you to know.

The Mediterranean diet is noted for its emphasis on whole, fresh foods and has grown in popularity due to its health benefits, such as heart and brain health and a lower risk of chronic illness. The good news is that this diet may be adjusted to match the needs of children and teens.

The diet focuses on meals that are fresh, minimally processed and nutritious. It includes fruits and vegetables, usually incorporating different colors of vegetables and types daily. Healthy fats are added in from olive oil, nuts and seeds. Lean proteins include fish, chicken, lentils and legumes, with a minimal amount of red meat. The dairy is generally in small quantities of yogurt and cheese. Sweets are kept to a minimum.

According to research, children who follow the Mediterranean diet more often are less likely to wheeze and have asthma.



KATHY KOLASA

atherosclerotic development and arterial stiffness. Atherosclerosis happens when the presence of fat buildup causes the blood vessel walls to thicken due to a narrowed pathway for blood to flow. This leads the arterial walls to resist stretching and stiffness occurs.

Studies show that children who follow a Mediterranean diet tend to have lower rates of obesity and better overall health compared to children who do not. The diet's focus on whole foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, makes it a healthy choice for kids and teens, who require suitable nourishment to support their growth, brain development and energy levels. Most aspects of the Mediterranean diet align well with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for young people.

While the Mediterranean diet provides many nutrients essential for growth and development, there are some

important points to keep in mind when adapting it for younger age groups. Kids and teens have different calorie and nutrient needs. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, ages 9- to 13-year-old females require about 1,400 to 2,200 calories per day and males require about 1,600 to 2,600 calories per day. For teenagers ages 14-18, females require about 1,800 to 2,400 calories per day and males require about 2,000 to 3,200 calories per day. The Mediterranean diet can meet these needs by including high-calorie, nutrient-dense foods like avocados, nuts and olive oil.

Calcium, which is found in dairy products like milk, cheese and yogurt, helps maintain healthy bones in growing kids and teenagers. Although dairy is not emphasized much in the Mediterranean diet, make sure your children are getting enough by including cheese and yogurt regularly. Ages 9-18 require 15 mcg or 600 International Units (IU) of vitamin D daily and also require 1,300mg daily of calcium. Refer to the Nutrition Facts Label; under the nutrients section, add up the vitamin D or calcium category throughout the day and compare this amount to their required daily intake. Vitamin D, which

is obtained through safe sun exposure or fortified meals, is necessary for the absorption of calcium.

As they grow, children and teenagers need protein. A range of protein sources, including fish, poultry, beans and lentils, are part of the Mediterranean diet. These sources provide protein as much as saturated fats that are present in red meat.

Omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in fish, are particularly beneficial for brain function. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, certain fats, particularly omega-3 fatty acids, can be beneficial for mental health and cognitive development.

The Mediterranean diet is a healthy choice for the entire family, especially your 10- and 17-year-olds. It is consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provides nutrients that children and teenagers require for growth and development. By including a variety of nutrient-rich foods and making small adjustments for your kids' ages and needs, you can help them enjoy the benefits of this balanced and delightful way of eating.

Professor emerita Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolaskak@ecu.edu.

TASTEFOOD

Pizza to the rescue during busy holiday season

During this festive season, with its lengthy to-do lists, socializing and houseguests, a simple dinner sandwiched between holiday prep provides a welcome respite. A recipe that's rustic and easy, with optional shortcuts, is satisfying and comforting and can be enjoyed at the kitchen table or in front of the fire. And guess what? It can also stand in as a low-key appetizer, divided into small portions and offered to unannounced visitors or lingering houseguests who seem to have misplaced their car keys.



LYNDA BALSLEV

The ingredients on the pizza evoke the mountains, with nutty, alpine cheese and slippery golden onions. For the easiest prep, use a prepared pizza dough. There are many options available in supermarkets of decent quality. This recipe provides instructions for oven-baking, but the pizza can also be prepared on a grill over indirect high heat.

If you have the time and bandwidth, try the recipe below for homemade dough. It's an adapted recipe from Roberta's, a popular Brooklyn pizzeria, via Sam Sifton at The New York Times. It's easy to make but requires rising time, preferably overnight in the refrigerator. For your extra effort, gift yourself with a double recipe and freeze the extras for later use. (Simply defrost the frozen dough overnight in the refrigerator before using.)

CARAMELIZED ONION AND GRUYERE PIZZA

Active time: 40 minutes
Total time: 1 hour
Yield: Makes one 12- to 14-inch pizza



PHOTO BY LYNDA BALSLEV FOR TASTEFOOD

During this festive season, with its lengthy to-do lists, socializing and houseguests, a simple dinner — like this Caramelized Onion and Gruyere Pizza — sandwiched between holiday prep provides a welcome respite.

Ingredients:
■ 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
■ 2 large yellow onions, halved, thinly sliced
■ Kosher salt
■ 1 large garlic clove, grated
■ 1 ball prepared pizza dough, about 1 pound, defrosted if frozen, at room temperature
■ 1/3 cup packed finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, divided
■ 1 cup packed grated Gruyere cheese, about 4 ounces
■ 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, plus more for garnish
■ Freshly ground black pepper

Preparation:
Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onions and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook the onions until they are soft, golden and beginning to caramelize in spots, 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Combine the remaining 2 tablespoons oil and garlic in a small bowl.

Place a pizza stone on the lowest rack in the oven. Heat the oven to its highest setting, about 500 degrees. Generously dust a pizza peel with flour or line a rimless baking sheet with a piece of parchment. Thinly roll or stretch the dough into a 12- to 14-inch circle or oval (it's OK if it's irregular in shape). Transfer the dough to the peel or the parchment.

Brush the dough with some of the oil, leaving a 1/2-inch border clear.

Sprinkle half of the Parmigiano-Reggiano over the oil. Spread the onions over the pizza. Top with the Gruyere and thyme. Sprinkle the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano over the pizza. Garnish with freshly ground black pepper and lightly season with salt. Carefully slide the pizza onto the pizza stone. Bake until the toppings begin to char and the crust is crisp and golden brown, 15 to 18 minutes, rotating the pizza once for even cooking.

Slide the pizza off the stone and transfer to a cutting board. Immediately brush the border with some of the remaining oil. Garnish with thyme leaves.

Let stand for 3 to 5 minutes before cutting into wedges. Serve warm.

ROBERTA'S PIZZA DOUGH

Active time: 10 minutes
Total time: 25 minutes plus rest and rising time
Yield: Makes 2 dough balls

Ingredients:
■ 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon 00 flour
■ 1 cup plus 1 tablespoon and 2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
■ 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
■ 3/4 teaspoon active dry yeast
■ 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil

Preparation:
In a large mixing bowl, combine flours and salt. In a small mixing bowl, stir together 200 grams (a little less than 1 cup) lukewarm tap water, the yeast and the olive oil, then pour

it into flour mixture. Knead with your hands until well combined, approximately 3 minutes, then let the mixture rest for 15 minutes.

Knead rested dough for 3 minutes. Cut into 2 equal pieces and shape each into a ball. Place on a heavily floured surface, cover with dampened cloth and let rest and rise for 3 to 4 hours at room temperature or for 8 to 24 hours in the refrigerator. (If you refrigerate the dough, remove it 30 to 45 minutes before you begin to shape it for pizza.)

To make pizza, place each dough ball on a heavily floured surface and use your fingers to stretch it, then your hands to shape it into rounds or squares. Top and bake.

Lynda Balslev is an award-winning writer, cookbook author, and recipe developer based in northern California. Visit TasteFood at TasteFoodblog.com.



OBITUARIES

James Thomas "Jimmy" Letchworth

FARMVILLE - James Thomas (Jimmy) Letchworth, 92, joined the Church Triumphant on Friday, December 6, 2024. He was joyfully reunited with many loved ones, including his parents, Roland and Minnie Letchworth; his beloved wife of 69 years, Joyce; and his sons, Roland McKel Letchworth and Spencer Craig Letchworth. He also experienced a heavenly reunion with his four brothers and four sisters.

He is survived by his son Keith Letchworth and wife Cindy; grandson Spencer Letchworth and wife Kristen; granddaughters Kelly Letchworth Heritage and husband Charlie, Jenny Letchworth and fiancé Greg Pittman; step-grandchildren Greg Vandiford and wife Suzanne; Jessica O'Neal and husband Josh; Lauren Cunningham Wikoff and husband Jared; and Jared Cunningham; He is lovingly remembered by his daughters-in-law Betsy Vandiford Angel (wife of Craig) and Libby Cunningham Letchworth (wife of Roland). His legacy lives on through twelve great-grandchildren.

Affectionately known as Uncle Jimmy, he was cherished by his 19 nieces and nephews. One nephew fondly shared, "He was a great uncle to all of us." A niece remarked, "...he has taught us all unconditional love and forgiveness." Another niece reflected, "He is truly one of the finest people I have ever known."

Jimmy's devotion to his family was unwavering. He found great joy in assisting Joyce with hosting Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Sunday meals for their children and grandchildren. He also treasured attending the Letchworth and Bynum Family Reunions. Most memorable were the Letchworth Family Christmas Dinners he and Joyce hosted at their home, which often welcomed more than 80 family members.

A devout Christian, Jimmy was deeply committed to serving others. His lifelong service began at Saratoga Christian Church, continued at Westview Christian Church in Wilson, and culminated at First Christian Church in Farmville. At First Christian, he contributed tirelessly, preparing the sanctuary and fellowship hall for events, serving as a deacon and elder, and chairing nearly every church committee. He was an active participant in the Christian Men's Fellowship, both locally and in the district.

Jimmy was well known in the community, first through his 14 years as the Sealtest milkman and later during his 40-year tenure at Farmville Funeral Home. He approached both roles with a servant's heart, viewing his work at the funeral home as a ministry. He was a source of comfort and support to families during their times of grief.

As a member of the Farmville Kiwanis Club for more than 40 years, Jimmy served as Treasurer for at least 20 of those years. One of his greatest joys was writing scholarship checks to graduating seniors from Farmville Central High School, helping them pursue their dreams of higher education.

A fellow church member summarized Jimmy's impact: "If you look up 'gentleman' and 'saint' in the dictionary, you will find Jimmy Letchworth's name in each definition."

Special gratitude goes to Judy Whitley and Sylvia Higgins, the loving caregivers for Jimmy during the last months of his life. Also, special thanks go to the staff of Gentiva Hospice for not only the care, but the love and compassion shown to him and his family.

Visitation will be held from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 10, at Farmville Funeral Home, 4226 E. Church Street, Farmville, NC.

Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, December 11, at 11:00 a.m. at Farmville Funeral Home, with interment to follow at Hollywood Cemetery in Farmville.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to First Christian Church, 3776 S. Main Street, Farmville, NC 27823.

Jimmy's life was a testament to faith, family, and service, and his legacy will be cherished by all who knew him.

Online condolences may be made at www.farmvillefh.com.

DEATH NOTICES

GREENVILLE — **Eleanor Rogers Corbin**, 82, died on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024. Funeral Friday at 11 a.m., at Smith Funeral Service & Crematory. Visitation one hour prior to the service at the funeral home.

GREENVILLE — **Roger Lee Page**, 86, died on Saturday, Dec. 7, 2024. Service times to be announced at a later date. Arrangements by Wilkerson Funeral Home and Crematory.

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