

Survey of literature for human nutrition

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Title: Mediterranean diet as a nutrition education and dietary guide: misconceptions and the neglected role of locally consumed foods and wild green plants.

Source: Local mediterranean food plants and nutraceuticals (Heinrich, M.; Muller, W. E.; Galli, C. eds.)

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Abstract: In the middle of the previous century, the Seven Countries Study first revealed the health benefits of the traditional Cretan diet. The Cretan diet was subsequently used as a basis to form the worldwide known 'Mediterranean diet'. This dietary scheme was visualized as a food pyramid, aimed to constitute a nutrition education tool and guide for the general public and scientific community. However, the way this dietary guide has been perceived by both the public and in certain cases by the scientific community may be oversimplified. From the nutritional point of view, some of the neglected parts of this diet concern the role of locally consumed wild greens, herbs, walnuts, figs and snails, and all sources of n-3 fatty acids. The above foods with the addition of fish provide a n-6:n-3 ratio of 2:1, whereas in Northern Europe and the USA, the ratio is 10-20:1. Moreover, the flavonoid and antioxidant contents of the traditional Cretan diet may have been underestimated. Despite the increasing knowledge on the bioprotective profile of the traditional Cretan diet, there is a need to revisit the way this knowledge is transferred to the public, emphasizing the importance of some neglected food and nutrients.