



Eggplant and Mediterranean salad

This easy-to-make dish embodies the health-supporting Mediterranean diet.

Ingredients

- 4 cloves garlic
- ½ teaspoon salt, plus pinch for dressing if required
- 2 dessertspoons fresh oregano, or 1 teaspoon dried
- 2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus another 1-2 tablespoons for dressing
- 1 medium-large eggplant
- 2 zucchinis
- 250g cherry tomatoes, or 4 tomatoes
- 1 large handful fresh basil leaves
- 1 handful fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 red capsicum
- 1 handful black olives

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⌚ Prep and cooking time: 35 minutes. 🍴 Serves 4, 6 if served with other salads
Vegan, gluten free

Method

In a mortar and pestle, grind 2 garlic cloves, salt and fresh oregano leaves to a paste (if using dried oregano, mix in after garlic and salt has been ground to paste). Add 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil (enough to coat vegetables), mix well.

Slice eggplant into 1cm thick rounds, then quarters. Slice zucchini into slightly thinner rounds. Toss eggplant and zucchini through oregano oil, coating thoroughly. Allow to marinate for a few minutes. Chop tomatoes, place in salad bowl. Heat a non-stick frying pan or BBQ to medium-high heat. Cook eggplant 2-3 minutes each side. Repeat with zucchini.

While vegetables are cooking, chop fresh basil and parsley. Cut red capsicum into 1.5cm pieces, add to salad bowl.

Add cooked vegetables to salad bowl. Add fresh herbs and toss. Dress salad with remaining 2 garlic cloves, extra virgin olive oil and pinch of salt. Top with black olives.

Serving suggestions: serve with grilled or BBQ fish (fresh sardines would be perfect), chicken or meat, haloumi or feta, or toss through a rinsed can of legumes such as chickpeas, borlotti or red kidney beans.

Nutritional information

Interest in the Mediterranean diet grows, due to evidence linking it to a reduced risk of diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. It features brightly coloured and varied vegetables, fruit, whole grains, legumes, fish, extra virgin olive oil (EVOO), nuts, herbs, small amounts of unsweetened dairy (often sheep and goats), and meat only a few times a week.

These foods of the Mediterranean diet contain plant chemicals that are anti-inflammatory and rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants help fight potential damage caused to the body's cells by free radicals. When antioxidants are outnumbered by free radicals, it can trigger inflammation. It's now believed the basis of chronic disease is low-grade inflammation. The red and purple pigments in eggplant, capsicum and tomatoes represent disease-fighting polyphenol antioxidants.

EVOO is often praised as a key component of the Mediterranean diet, due to its high nutritional value and in particular its richness of monounsaturated fatty acids, vitamins and polyphenols. Invest in the best EVOO you can afford and use it generously. The Mediterranean herbs oregano, basil, flat-leaf parsley and garlic flavour this dish; the basil and parsley quantities count for an extra serve of green leafy vegetable for the day, and all combined, embody the Mediterranean diet.

