

30 Years of the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

Madrid, Thursday, November 21, 2024

CSIC headquarters (C/Serrano 117, Madrid, Spain) and [streaming](#)

Commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Mediterranean diet pyramid

In **November 2024**, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the official publication of the **Mediterranean diet pyramid**. We would like to recognize the people and organizations that pioneered this initiative, as well as the impact this work has had on the preservation and advancement of this Mediterranean cultural heritage for the benefit of the health of humanity.

Many of the leading scientists in health and the Mediterranean diet, true **eminences of science and knowledge**, are still active and making a decisive contribution to promoting human and planetary health. In a world facing the challenge of feeding a growing global population in a healthy and sustainable way, the **Mediterranean diet** - with olive oil as an essential ingredient - is more relevant than ever.

The **Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)**, together with the **International Olive Council (IOC)** and the **International Centre for Advanced Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM)**, are celebrating **World Olive Day on Thursday, November 21**, to recognize the indispensable contributions of the olive tree and to promote the spreading of knowledge and understanding of the importance and benefits of the Mediterranean diet.

Background: the popularization of the Mediterranean diet pyramid

The **Mediterranean Diet**, traditional to the olive-growing areas of the **Mediterranean Sea**, is one of the healthiest eating habits in the world. **Olive oil** is an essential part that facilitates the increased incorporation of vegetables and other plant-sourced foods in dietary patterns, providing health benefits that are recognized by numerous scientific studies. These include reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, the ability to improve brain health, providing essential antioxidants that fight cellular aging, and the prevention of certain cancers.

Although this diet has a millennia-old tradition, it was not properly recognized until a group of leading nutrition scientists, public health experts, food and cultural scholars began to investigate the patterns of the traditional Mediterranean diet circa 1960. These efforts, building on the earlier pioneering work of **Professor Ancel Keys** and his 'Seven Countries Study' and led by world-renowned institutions such as the **Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health—Department of Nutrition** and the **World Health Organization** in collaboration with **Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust**, culminated in a series of conferences and papers that established the "**Healthy Traditional Mediterranean Diet Pyramid**," recognized worldwide.

Groups of experts developed and presented the **International Conference on Mediterranean Diets** in 1993, a follow-up conference in 1994 and a series of scientific articles published in special issues of the **American Journal of Clinical Nutrition** in 1995 and 1997, which awakened international interest in this culturally rooted, plant-forward nutritional pattern, changing the course of global nutrition research and public health orientations. Currently, the international scientific community, which includes the CSIC, continues to work intensively to understand the mechanisms through which olive oil exerts its beneficial effects on health. Additionally, in a context shaped by new challenges such as climate change and the need for more sustainable production systems, innovative strategies are being explored to preserve the Mediterranean diet and ensure a healthy and balanced diet.

Guest Speakers



Walter Willett, MD, DrPH – *“Mediterranean diet: Planetary diet, sustainability and health promotion in the XXI century.”*

Professor of Epidemiology and Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; former Chair, Department of Nutrition, Harvard. Known for pioneering dietary methods in large cohort studies, including the Nurses' Health Studies. Author of over 2,000 research papers and widely cited in nutritional science.



Antonia Trichopoulou, MD – *“Health benefits of olive oil and the Mediterranean diet: from Crete to the rest of the world.”*

Member, Academy of Athens; Adjunct Professor, Yale University. Expert in nutritional epidemiology, focusing on the Mediterranean diet. Recipient of FENS Award, Greek Government Golden Cross of Honour, and recognized as a Highly Cited Researcher by Clarivate Analytics.



Frank Hu, MD, PhD – *“The science of the Mediterranean diet.”*

Chair, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School. Research focuses on diet and lifestyle impacts on cardiometabolic diseases. Noted for contributions to dietary guidelines and over 1,400 publications.



Miguel A. Martínez-González, MD, PhD, MPH – *“Olive oil and the Mediterranean diet in large randomized trials.”*

Professor of Public Health, University of Navarra; Adjunct Professor of Nutrition, Harvard. Principal investigator of major studies on chronic disease and Mediterranean diet, including SUN and PREDIMED. Author of 1,400+ publications and leading Spanish textbooks on epidemiology. Recipient of Spain's Gregorio Marañón National Research Award in Medicine (2023).



Enrique Martínez Force, PhD – *“The CSIC addresses the future of the Mediterranean diet with an integrated approach within a global concept of food quality and safety.”*

Research Professor and Director, *Instituto de la Grasa* (IG-CSIC), founded in 1947 and dedicated to studying olive oil's chemical composition, the factors influencing it, as well as the cellular mechanisms by which its bioactive compounds impact health and disease prevention.



Greg Drescher – *“The Mediterranean diet pyramid: yesterday and today.”*

Senior Advisor, The Culinary Institute of America; co-creator of the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid and Menus of Change. Inducted into the James Beard Foundation's Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America.

Moderator



Raúl Compés López, PhD – Director of CIHEAM Zaragoza; Vice President, European Association of Wine Economists; Professor of Agricultural Economics, Polytechnic University of Valencia. Former President of the Spanish Association of Agricultural Economics (2013–2019). His work focuses on agro-food sector economics, including wine, climate change, and sustainability. Coordinator of award-winning books on wine economy and climate change challenges in the Mediterranean.

Organizers



The **Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)**, established in 1939, is Spain's largest public research institution. It is dedicated to advancing knowledge across various scientific fields, ranging from natural to social sciences, through research, innovation, and the promotion of science for societal benefit.



INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL

market development.

The **International Olive Council (IOC)**, founded in 1959, is an intergovernmental organization that promotes the global olive oil and table olive sectors. It sets quality standards, conducts research, and fosters international cooperation to support sustainable olive production and



The **International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM)**, established in 1962, is an intergovernmental organization focused on sustainable agricultural development, food security, and rural development in the Mediterranean region. It promotes these goals through education, research, and technical cooperation among Mediterranean countries.