

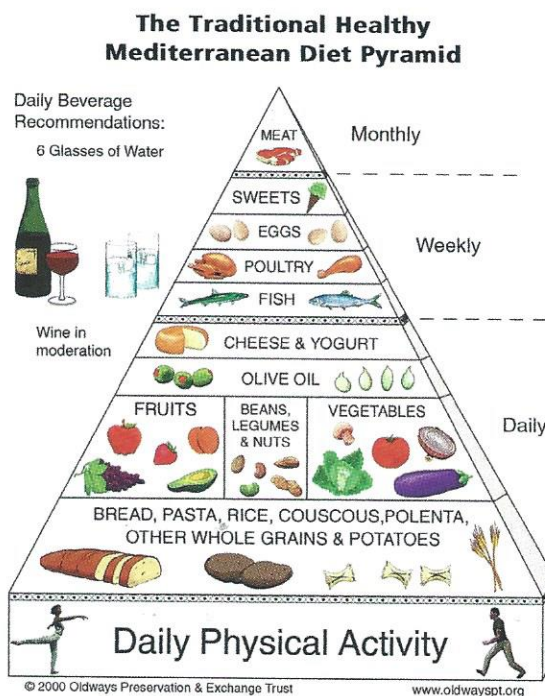
The design of the pyramid shows how much of each of the different food groups is needed to stay healthy. It is in a pyramid shape to explain the different proportions of foods to one another. The foods that make up the base (the widest part) should provide the bulk (the biggest part) of the diet. Progressing further up the pyramid, the requirements get smaller as the pyramid gets skinnier.

The Food Guide Pyramid also sets out the number of servings that should be eaten from each component of the pyramid each day. On the whole, the American diet is too high in fat. Following the USDA guidelines will help maintain a diet low in total fat and saturated fat. This will reduce the chances of getting certain diseases associated with a high-fat diet.

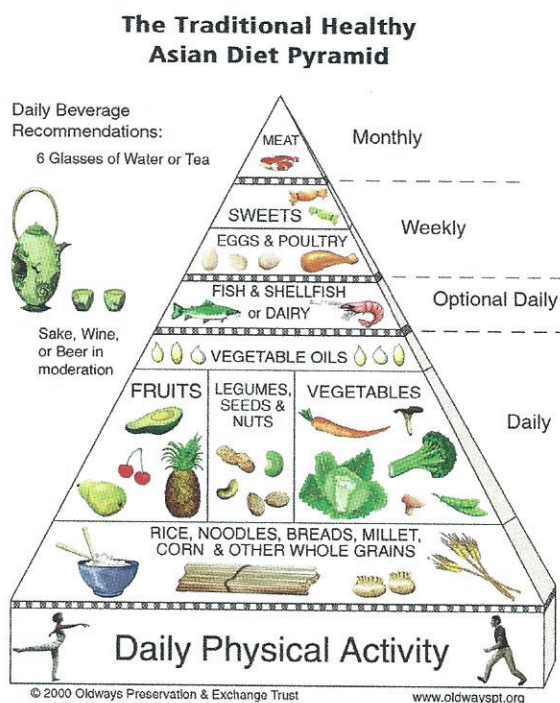
The following guidelines were developed jointly by the USDA and HHS. These guidelines are considered the latest and most up-to-date advice from nutrition scientists:

- Aim for a healthy weight.
- Be physically active each day.
- Let the Pyramid guide your food choices.
- Choose a variety of grains daily, especially whole grains.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables daily.
- Keep food safe to eat.
- Choose a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and moderate in total fat.
- Choose beverages and foods to moderate your intake of sugars.
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt.
- If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

Each culture has its own nutritional standards for healthful living. To devise food guidance systems appropriate for each nation, many countries have applied research regarding their national food supplies, food consumption patterns, nutrition status, and nutritional standards toward development of individual food guides. For instance, the U.S. Food Guide Pyramid is firmly based on USDA research as to the types of foods Americans consume, the nutrient composition of those foods, and their relation to the individual's nutrient needs. In some food guides, the presence of indigenous foods and particular dietary patterns resulting from different geographical conditions and cultural heritages have also been considered. It is well known that various cultures have different food availabilities, food preferences, dietary patterns, and cultural definitions of foods. The food pyramids in Figure 8-7 through Figure 8-9 are included for comparison.



**Figure 8-7** Mediterranean Diet Pyramid (©2000 Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, [www.oldwayspt.org](http://www.oldwayspt.org))



**Figure 8-8** The Asian Diet Pyramid (©2000 Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, [www.oldwayspt.org](http://www.oldwayspt.org))

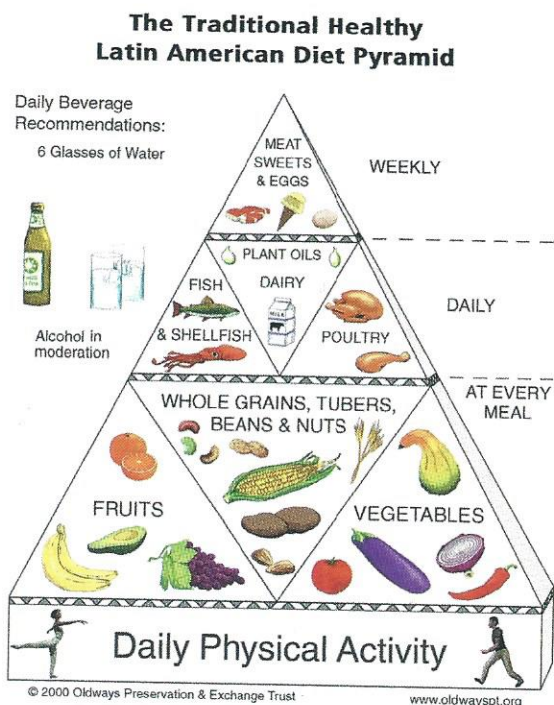


Figure 8-9 The Latin Diet Pyramid (©2000 Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust; www.oldwayspt.org)

The Mediterranean diet delivers as much as 40% of total daily calories from fat, yet the associated incidence of cardiovascular disease is significantly decreased. Because it is a monosaturated fatty acid, olive oil does not have the same cholesterol-raising effect of saturated fats. Olive oil is also a good source of antioxidants. Eating fish a few times per week benefits the Mediterranean people by increasing their intake of omega-3 fatty acids, something that the rest of the world's societies usually do not get enough of.

The Asian Diet Pyramid emphasizes a wide base of rice, rice products, noodles, breads, and grains, preferably whole grain and minimally processed foods, topped by another large band of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Physical exercise, a small amount of vegetable oil, and moderate consumption of plant-based beverages (including tea, especially black and green, sake, beer, and wine) also are recommended daily. Small daily servings of dairy products (low-fat dairy are optional; sweets, eggs, and poultry are recommended no more than weekly, and red meat no more than monthly).

The Latin American diet places poultry, meats, and eggs toward the top of the pyramid. It also recommends that beans, nuts, vegetables, and fruit be consumed at every meal. Daily physical activity is an important component of overall fitness.

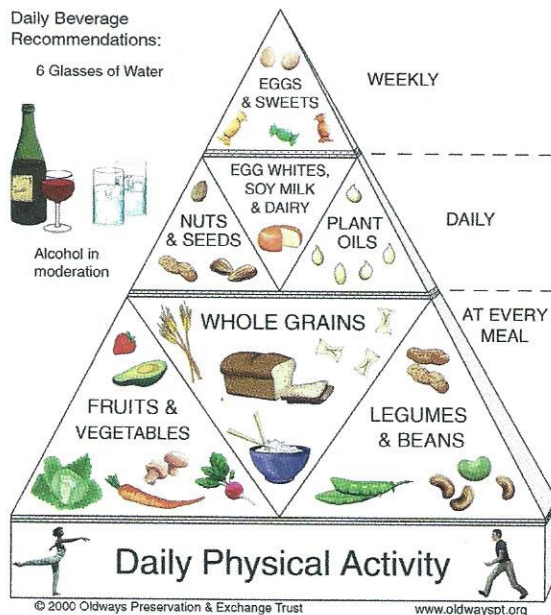
Note the similarities and differences in the diets from these three regions of the world and the food pyramid of the United States. The Mediterranean, Asian, and Latin American diets emphasize cultural eating patterns and include a more limited range of foods. Another major difference is that these pyramids utilize more plant-based proteins (those from legumes, soybeans, nuts, and seeds) than those found in meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products. Similarities include an emphasis on eating plenty of grain products and vegetables and fruit. Physical activity is another area that all food guide pyramids have in common.

Another diet popular with many is the vegetarian diet (Figure 8-10). According to the American Dietetic Association, planned vegetarian diets are healthful, are nutritionally adequate, and provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.

**KEY CONCEPT**

The most striking similarity in all ethnic food guide pyramids and the USDA's pyramid is the emphasis on eating plenty of grains, fruits, and vegetables and getting enough physical activity. The differences lie in the quantities of typical foods eaten by different ethnic groups on a regular basis.

### The Traditional Healthy Vegetarian Diet Pyramid



**Figure 8-10** The Vegetarian Diet Pyramid (©2000 Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, [www.oldwayspt.org](http://www.oldwayspt.org))