

Eat Healthy, Cook With Olive Oil

(NAPSA)—A diet nearly as old as the gods of Mt. Olympus—the Mediterranean Diet—continues to provide Americans guidelines for eating healthy. At a time when medical studies are revealing the negative affects of hydrogenated fats, a staple in the American food industry, more people are realizing a diet rich in olive oil may address a number of modern health concerns such as heart disease, hypertension, cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

The substitution of olive oil for other seed-based oils in the preparation of food is a culinary technique as old as the Mediterranean. Based on extensive demographic research in Spain, Italy, and Greece (the three Mediterranean countries producing 97 percent of the world's olive oil), olive oil has been identified as a catalyst for lowering blood pressure and the risk of heart disease.

Dieticians explain that this is due in large part to olive oil's high content of monounsaturated fat and antioxidants such as Vitamins A, E and polyphenolics. They also believe that those same monounsaturated fats are crucial to reducing the concentration of the total cholesterol in the blood. Likewise, the powerful antioxidants in olive oil are an excellent resource in preventing the growth and development of cancer.

When frying foods at home, Americans tend to overlook olive oil for what they may not realize is a less healthy oil. For example, hydrogenated oil blends originally attracted the attention of the fast



food industry because the oils' chemical makeup could withstand high temperatures and repeated frying sessions without breaking down or developing "off flavors."

Olive oil also has a high smoking point and a very stable chemical makeup, which along with its nutritional benefits make it ideal for frying.

The catch is that the hydrogenated oil blends are not heart healthy: their trans-fatty acids can promote heart disease by increasing levels of blood cholesterol, low density lipoproteins and triglyceride levels while also decreasing the level of high density lipoproteins.

Moreover, studies have shown that frying with extra virgin olive oil enriches foods with antioxidants from special compounds—a chemical class called "polyphenolics"—that can't be found in other oils typically used for frying.

To learn more about the health benefits of olive oil, visit the International Olive Oil Council Web site at www.internationaloliveoil.org.