

CRETE: EXPERIENCE THE GASTRONOMIC MAGIC OF SIMPLICITY



EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY
CRETE CANDIDATE 2026



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Stop looking for the pill which substitutes for the Cretan diet.
There is no such thing.

Serge Renaud, 1998



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AIMS



AIMS OF THE CANDIDATURE AND LINK WITH IGCAT (INSTITUTE OF GASTRONOMY, CULTURE, ARTS AND TOURISM) VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

OUR AIMS

IGCAT values, principles and purposes

Encourage public and private stakeholders to share a common project, which, due to its strong identity value, can incentivize them to work as a team towards a common goal.



Be part of an International platform and attend the initiatives of the platform will be a powerful tool to work as a team to show the Cretan identity, to share the strengths and be inspired from other regions experiences.

Enhance the Cretan diet in its uniqueness and free it from overlapping with the Mediterranean diet.



Well being an healthier living IGCAT advocates for the promotion of healthier lifestyles through greater awareness and citizen engagement in natural farming, outdoor recreation, and culinary and cultural traditions.

Protect the heritage of Cretan gastronomic culture and pass on its legacy to the new generations.



Educating for our future The World Regions of Gastronomy prioritize collaboration with education and knowledge sectors. These collaborations are vital for the dissemination of information on the importance of regional gastronomy for the future health and well-being of citizens.

Encourage the use of local products by tourism and catering operators.



Innovation creativity and job opportunities
Creativity in the form of storytelling and visuals can generate both new products and services. The widening of food markets poses unique opportunities for sustainable regional food systems.

Thus increasing the value of the product and the demand to bring the young generations back towards agriculture.



Educating for the future
The World Regions of Gastronomy prioritize collaboration with education and knowledge sectors. These collaborations are vital for the dissemination of information on the importance of regional gastronomy for the future health and well-being of citizens.

Make Crete emerge as a gastronomic destination for all seasons, overcoming summer over tourism to move towards more qualified and sustainable tourism.



Activate pilot actions to reduce plastic consumption, encourage separate waste collection.

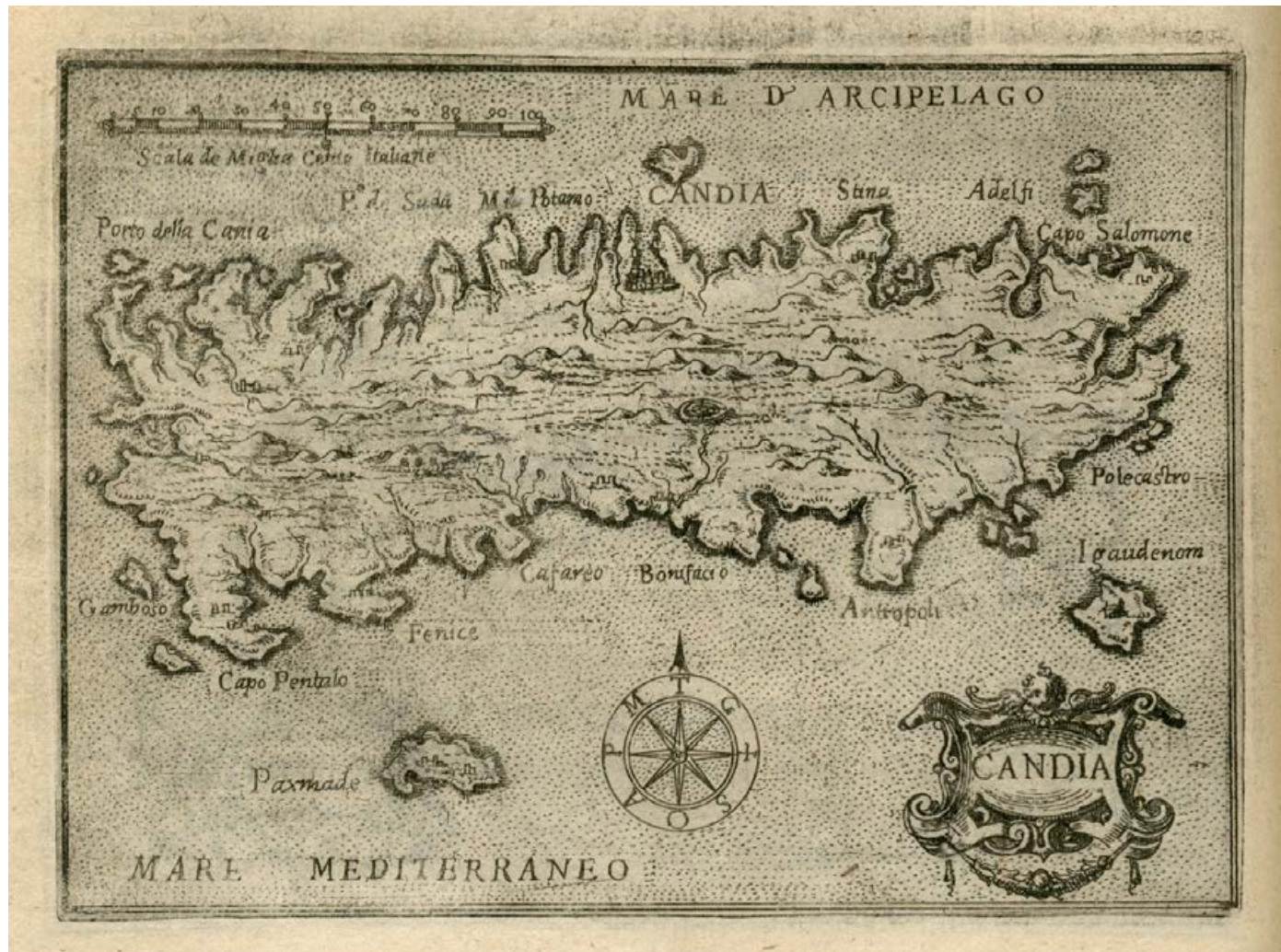
Balanced and Sustainable Tourism
Raising awareness about the advantages of integrating local food, recipes and traditions into tourism offerings and collaborating with food and cultural events services in the region will contribute to greater environmental, economic and cultural sustainability. Visitors are the best ambassadors for a region thanks to social media and can increase the client base for food export.

Raise awareness among citizens of respect for the territory and induce responsible and socially and environmentally sustainable behaviour.



Feeding the planet
In support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, IGCAT's World Regions of Gastronomy aim to stimulate debate about the production of sufficient and healthy food for everyone.





PREAMBULE

Cretan gastronomy is a cultural treasure that dates back thousands of years. Its traditional dishes and unique ingredients reflect the island's rich history and geographical location in the Mediterranean. Cretan cuisine is known for its health benefits, thanks to the emphasis on fresh and seasonal ingredients and despite the influences it has incorporated, it has remained basically the same for thousands of years. Sustainability is also at the heart of Cretan gastronomy, with a focus on using local produce and preserving traditional methods. In this book, we will delve into the history, tradition, heritage, sustainability, and health benefits of Cretan cuisine. We will also explore how to experience Cretan gastronomy through food tours and cooking classes and discuss the future of this culinary heritage.

The Cretan cuisine is a testament to the island's biodiversity, cultural diversity, and exceptional culinary expertise. Furthermore, the Cretan cuisine has significant contributions to the Mediterranean diet, representing a model of healthy and sustainable eating that can inspire individuals and communities worldwide. The Cretan gastronomy is not just food; it is a cultural legacy and a sustainable way of life that deserves to be celebrated and cherished.



METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

For the creation of this book, Educational Development Company Ploigos, lead partner of the candidacy, implemented a bottom up approach, for the choice of topics, materials, anecdotes and examples, 30 professionals from different scientific sectors with a connection to gastronomy, were interviewed over the course of a month : university professors, chefs, writers, historians, entrepreneurs, researchers, they all responded to the project team's questions, to build a dossier shared with the territory, not created from a desk and a library, even the recipes that will be presented were voted as the most representative, each interviewee indicated three preferences and among those the ones to be included in the bid book were defined.

INTRODUCTION

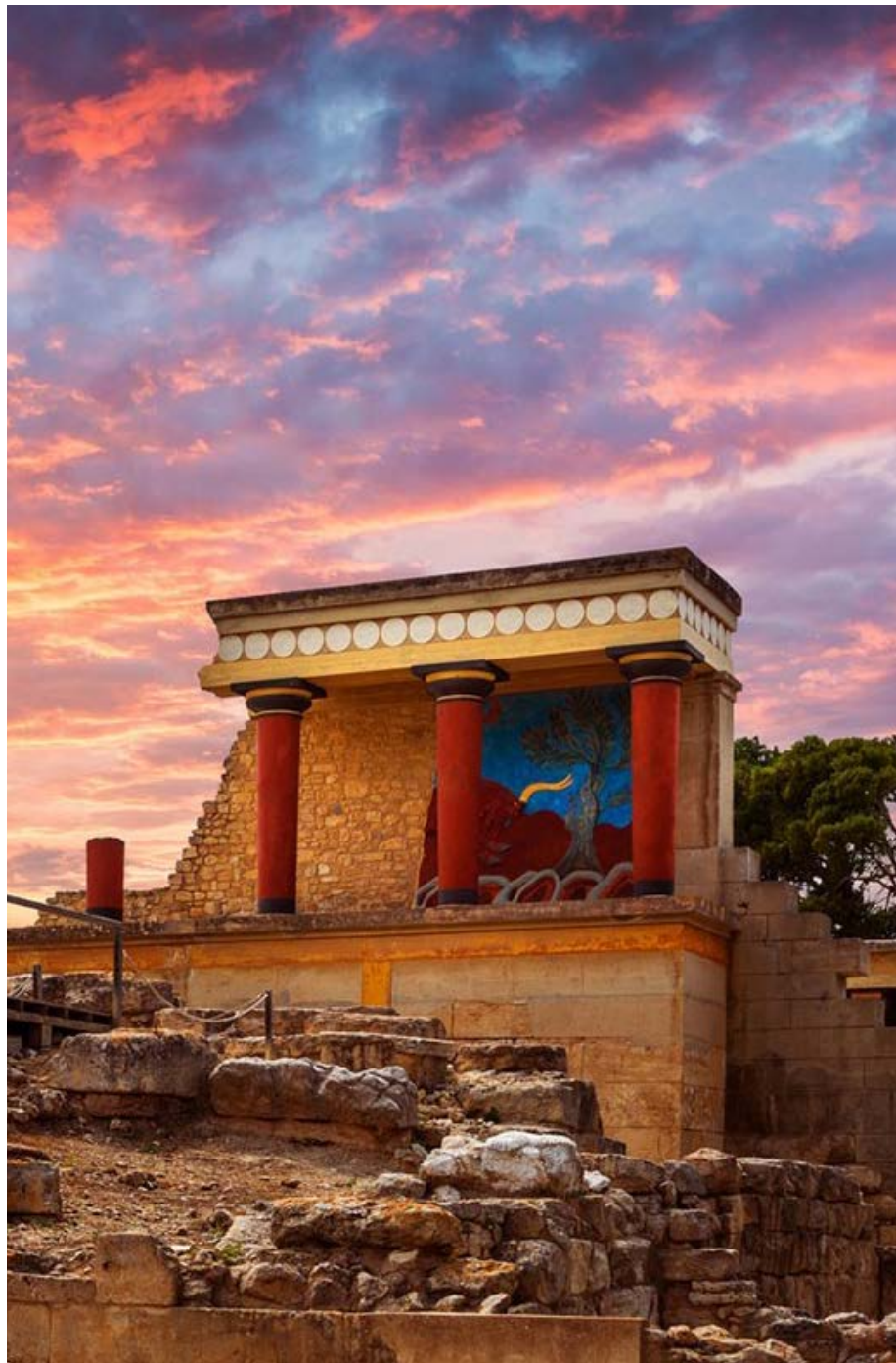
The Cretan gastronomy has a rich history of traditional and regional foods that reflect its strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Throughout history, the island of Crete has been a crossroads of civilizations, where the cuisine has absorbed various culinary influences and practices, resulting in a unique and exceptional gastronomy. The Cretan cuisine is part of the broader Mediterranean diet, characterised by a plant-based, whole-food pattern of eating rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and olive oil. Moreover, the Cretan diet is a testament to sustainability, including the use of local ingredients, seasonal produce, and traditional cooking methods. This essay will explore the Cretan gastronomy's sustainable heritage and its contributions to the Mediterranean diet.

First of all the Cretan cuisine embodies a culture of sustainability by using locally-sourced ingredients and seasonal produce. The island's geography, with its fertile valleys and rugged mountains, provides a rich diversity of crops, seafood, and meat. Sustainable agriculture practices have been a crucial element of the Cretan diet, with farmers using techniques passed

down through generations, such as crop rotation, companion planting, and natural fertilisation methods. Additionally, the cuisine has integrated wild herbs, plants, and mushrooms, reflecting the Cretan's deep relationship with their natural surroundings. The use of local and seasonal ingredients not only reflects a commitment to sustainability but also flavours the cuisine, making it truly unique and delicious.

Furthermore the Cretan gastronomy has a deep historical heritage that dates back centuries. The island's location has made it a coveted and contested place throughout history, attracting an array of civilizations and culinary influences. The Minoans, who flourished on the island between 3000 BC to 1450 BC, were known for their use of grains, honey, and wine, which is still present in the Cretan cuisine today. Subsequently, the island was conquered by Ancient Greece, Byzantines, Arabs, Venetians, Ottomans, and other imperial powers, each leaving their culinary legacy. The Cretan cuisine today is a fusion of these influences, highlighting the island's diverse cultural heritage.





The culinary history of Crete is truly fascinating, especially how it intertwines with the island's societal and cultural dynamics. The introduction of the 'Neolithic package' of economic plants and animals by the first settlers around 7.000BC laid the foundation for the rich agricultural practices that defined Crete's economy for centuries. It's impressive how they utilized the diverse landscape, from mountains to plains, for farming, animal husbandry, and cultivation of various crops and trees.

The Minoans (3.000BC -1450BC) relied heavily on locally available ingredients for their diet. They had a rich agricultural base, cultivating various crops like wheat, barley, and other cereals. Legumes such as lentils, grass pea, bitter vetch and celtic beans were also part of their agricultural practices.

The cultivation of olives for oil production was prominent, along with grapevines for making wine. Honey was another essential sweetener, obtained from beekeeping. Herbs and spices played a crucial role in flavoring their dishes, and the Minoans had a diverse range of these seasonings.

In terms of fruits and nuts, they consumed a variety, including figs, pomegranates, grapes, and almonds. These items were not just consumed as standalone fruits but were likely incorporated into various dishes, adding flavor and nutritional value.

Animal husbandry was practiced, providing a source of meat in their diet. They raised sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle. Seafood was abundant due to Crete's coastal location, and it constituted a significant portion of their diet, including fish and various mollusks.

Overall, the Minoans had access to a diverse range of foodstuffs from both land and sea, which contributed to the richness and variety of their cuisine.

Moving to the historical periods (3rd-1st c. BC), especially the numerous Hellenistic treaties between the Cretan cities highlight the significance of these agropastoral activities for the subsistence of the local communities. They formed the basis of the economy and were crucial for local communities, leading to agreements and treaties that regulated trade, grazing rights, and other aspects related to agriculture and animal husbandry. The exploitation of these diverse landscapes not only sustained the local populations but also contributed to the economic prosperity of the region. The utilization of natural resources in farming, animal husbandry, and trade played a key role in the development and sustainability of the Cretan economy throughout its history.

Food and beverages weren't just sustenance; they were integral to shaping identities and demonstrating power in ancient Cretan societies. The feasts during the Minoan period and the communal meals of the historical

period, known as *syssitia*, were pivotal social events where food acted as a symbol of community or even an expression of power and competition for authority in the first case.

In fact, the communal meals, taking place in large halls, known as *andreaia*, were gatherings where citizens dined together, reinforcing social bonds and a sense of community. Participation in these communal meals was often mandatory, and citizens were required to contribute a portion of their agricultural or pastoral produce for the common good. This contribution typically amounted to around one-tenth of their production, which helped fund the communal meals and ensured that everyone had a share in the provisions.

The *syssitia* not only provided a means for communal dining but also served as a way to reinforce social cohesion, promote egalitarianism among citizens, and cultivate a sense of unity and shared responsibility within the city-state.

The medicinal aspect of Cretan cuisine, as seen in the recipes unearthed at the sanctuary of Asclepius at Lebena, provides insights into the local ingredients used for healing purposes. Cereals, legumes, oil, wine, honey, and the region's unique herbs were not only consumed but also recognized for their medicinal properties, with some of these herbs even being cultivated and exported to other regions like Rome during the Imperial period.

It is amazing how these ancient culinary practices and traditions have persisted and shaped not just the diet but also the cultural heritage of Crete. The knowledge and utilization of local ingredients for both sustenance and healing reveal a deep understanding of the environment and its resources.

The study of ancient Cretan diet and cuisine is indeed a multidisciplinary endeavor that draws from various fields. Archaeobotany plays a crucial role by analyzing plant remains preserved in different states to uncover details about what people ate, how they prepared food, stored it, and even how they managed their agricultural practices. Zooarchaeology, on the other hand, examines animal remains, both terrestrial and marine, to understand the role of animals in the ancient Cretan diet while osteoarcheology examines human bones to glean information on nutritional patterns. The application of organic residue analysis on vessels is another fascinating technique that reveals traces of what these vessels contained, whether it was wine, oil, fats, or other substances, providing direct evidence of what was consumed or stored. Written sources like the Linear B tablets and the inscriptions found across the island offer invaluable insights into the daily life, trade, and sometimes even specific food-related information of ancient Cretans. Additionally, the writings of ancient authors contribute to our understanding of the food culture and practices of that era. By combining all these disciplines and analyzing material culture, researchers can piece together a comprehensive picture of the ancient Cretan diet, shedding light on their culinary practices, agricultural techniques, and the overall way of life. This interdisciplinary approach





helps reconstruct and understand aspects of the past that might otherwise remain hidden. These studies have been applied to several sites like Knossos, Cydonia, Palaikastro, Mochlos, Chryssi, Dreros and Azorias.

Today, Cretan gastronomy continues to evolve and adapt to changing tastes and trends. However, it remains deeply rooted in tradition and history. Many restaurants and taverns on the island offer traditional Cretan dishes made from locally sourced ingredients. This commitment to using local produce not only supports the local economy but also ensures that Cretan gastronomy remains sustainable for generations to come.

Cretan gastronomy is an important part of the island's cultural heritage and reflects its rich history and diverse influences. The cuisine of Crete has been shaped by various cultures over the centuries, including the Minoans, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, and Ottomans. These influences can be seen in the use of spices, cooking techniques, and ingredients in traditional Cretan dishes.

Cretan cuisine also plays an important role in social and cultural events on the island. Many traditional dishes are associated with religious festivals and celebrations. For example, gamopilafo (a rice dish made with lamb or chicken) is often served at weddings, while kalitsounia (small pies filled with cheese or herbs) are a popular dessert during Easter.

In addition to its association with religious events, Cretan cuisine is also an important part of daily life on the island. Family meals are a time for sharing traditional dishes and passing down recipes from generation to generation. Many Cretans take pride in their culinary heritage and view cooking as a way to connect with their culture and traditions.

The cultural heritage of Cretan gastronomy is also reflected in the island's culinary tourism industry. Food tours and cooking classes offer visitors the opportunity to learn about traditional Cretan dishes and cooking techniques. These experiences not only provide a deeper understanding of Cretan culture but also support local businesses and promote sustainable tourism.

The cultural heritage of Cretan gastronomy is an important part of the island's identity and reflects its rich history and diverse influences. Traditional Cretan dishes are deeply ingrained in daily life on the island and play an important role in social and cultural events.

Together with the heritage related with gastronomy Crete has an incredible story linked to viticulture and ampelography.

Cretan viticulture has a rich history shaped by various dominations and maritime traffic. The island's ampelography, including among others the notable case of Malvasia, reflects its close ties with the European continent. The exchange of grape varieties and winemaking practices played a significant role in shaping Cretan wine culture over the centuries.

The myth of Malvasia in Crete is intertwined with the island's viticultural heritage. Legend suggests that Malvasia, a renowned grape variety, has ancient roots in Crete, dating back to the Minoan civilization. The myth elevates Malvasia to a symbol of the island's winemaking prowess, with tales of its cultivation in ancient vineyards and its association with the cultural and economic identity of Crete. This mythical narrative contributes to the mystique surrounding Malvasia and its significance in Cretan winemaking.

It is worth mentioning the relation among Crete and the Venetian culture, present in architecture, history, heritage but also in viticulture. The Querini family, Venetian nobles, played a pivotal role in the Malvasia story in Crete during the mediaeval period. Following the Venetian domination of the island, the Querini family actively promoted viticulture, particularly the cultivation of Malvasia grapes. They recognized the potential of Malvasia and its economic value, leading to the establishment of vineyards and the production of Malvasia wine on the island. This historical connection between the Querini family and Malvasia underscores the influence of external powers on Cretan viticulture during that era.

Beyond the malvasia myth, Crete's ampelographic heritage is deeply rooted in its diverse array of grape varieties, blending indigenous cultivars with those introduced through historical influences. Varieties like Vidiano, Assyrtiko, Vilana, and Kotsifali are intrinsic to Cretan viticulture, reflecting the island's unique terroir. The historical legacies of Minoan, Venetian, and Ottoman periods have left a lasting imprint, shaping the grapevine landscape and contributing to the distinctive heritage of Cretan ampelography.



THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND MEN AND THE RITUALS IN CRETAN GASTRONOMY “THE BASIS OF THIS WORLD: BREAD, WINE, FIRE AND WOMAN “

Nikos Kazantzakis

Historically, gender roles have strongly influenced food production in Crete. Women often played a central role in agricultural activities, including cultivating crops, gathering wild herbs, and tending to livestock. Men were typically involved in activities such as fishing and larger-scale agricultural work.

The position of women in Crete experienced many changes over the centuries, which sometimes raised her as a priestess and sometimes trapped in the house and considered her almost as a "puppet" of her husband.

The woman of Crete as genuine warrior of life, managed in all cases to keep her dignity and social status and assist in the development of Cretan society.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN MINOAN ERA

We know from the frescoes of Minoan palaces, and by other archaeological findings the high social position that was held by women at that period.

During the Minoan era, women participated in events and undertook tasks such as priestess and had an active role in the Minoan society. It



was not considered as a taboo for a woman, to ply with work that today is characterised as Men Jobs like captain, lumberjack, boxer etc.

It is no coincidence that in the Minoan palaces, who were considered places of worship, worshiped the great Goddess of Snakes, which symbolized fertility and regeneration.

THE FAVORABLE MINOAN CIVIL CODE

Paul Faure, in his book "everyday life in Crete Minoan era," says elements of the Minoan Civil Code support the view that women were equal members of society and even, in some cases enjoyed special treatment.

Specifically it is stated that in Minoan Crete women would marry only when they were able to regulate their own domestic issues and after marriage their personal property was controlled exclusively by them. Also, the couple could split whenever wanted, even if the decision was made by one part of the couple. After the separation the woman resumes her dowry and half of what they had accomplished in their life together. However, if the woman would die and still was married, her husband was obligated to give her dowry to her family.

Another characteristic of the Minoan society, is known by Herodotus, who said that in Crete children were given the name of the mother and not the father. Continues by saying that "if a woman married a slave children were considered as a noble family. If, however, a citizen, even the first in social rank, had a foreign wife or concubine, their children would not enjoy any of the father's privileges.

WOMEN OF CRETE DURING THE VENETIAN PERIOD

The woman of Crete seems to have several advantages compared with other regions, at the Venetian era, according to tributes to article at the magazine "Archaeology", with title "The woman of Venetian Crete based on notarial sources". Women participated in public events, as stated by the preface of the theatrical play book "Panoria", written by Georgios Hortatsis, which addressed to the "honored women" and "noble maidens" who watched the play.

In Venetian we encounter for the first time endings on adjectives like -poula, for unmarried girls and -aina, for married women. We note that the women were married, many times, at ages less than 15 years and marriages made by match and marriage contract.

If the woman was vacant and had under aged children then the mother would sign apprenticeship contract with a cobbler, barber, e.t.c., who would take her child for some time and teach the child his work. Women of Venetian Crete could show off their skills at the commercial sector and work in the private sector, however, their salary was less than the salary of a man who did the same job.





CRETAN WOMEN IN THE LATER YEARS

Clearly, over the centuries, starting from the Minoan era, the role of women weakened. In later years we saw woman “standing” one step behind their husband and deal only with the household and in some cases may not have a word in what happened at the house.

Until modern times the roles for the preparation of meals are not written but very clear and shared among families through generations. While women have a specific role in the kitchen men are specific task in preparing dishes in front of guests (cfr recipes chapter antikristo and pilafi).



The Cretan Diet, inspired by the traditional dietary patterns of the Mediterranean region, has been associated with various health benefits. Here are some potential advantages of following the Cretan Diet:

Heart Health:

The Cretan Diet is rich in heart-healthy monounsaturated fats from olive oil, which may contribute to lower levels of cardiovascular disease. The consumption of fish, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables also supports heart health.

Longevity:

Studies have suggested that populations adhering to a Mediterranean-style diet, including the Cretan Diet, may experience increased longevity. The combination of a balanced and nutrient-dense diet is thought to contribute to overall well-being.

Reduced Risk of Chronic Diseases:

The Cretan Diet's emphasis on fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and olive oil may contribute to a lower risk of chronic diseases, including certain types of cancer, diabetes, and neurodegenerative conditions.

Weight Management:

The Cretan Diet is characterized by a high intake of fiber-rich foods and healthy fats, which may help with weight management. Additionally, the diet's emphasis on portion control and mindful eating can contribute to a healthy body weight.

Anti-Inflammatory Effects:

The abundance of fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids from fish in the Cretan Diet may have anti-inflammatory effects, potentially reducing the risk of inflammatory conditions and diseases.

Improved Metabolic Health:

Following the Cretan Diet has been associated with improvements in metabolic health, including better insulin sensitivity and glucose metabolism. This can be beneficial in preventing and managing type 2 diabetes.

Bone Health:

The Cretan Diet includes sources of calcium, such as dairy products and leafy green vegetables, which can contribute to overall bone health and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Rich in Antioxidants:

The diet's emphasis on fruits, vegetables, and olive oil provides a rich source of antioxidants, which help protect the body from oxidative stress and may reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Gut Health:

The inclusion of fiber-rich foods, such as whole grains, legumes, and fruits, supports a healthy gut microbiota. A balanced and diverse gut microbiome is associated with various health benefits, including improved digestion and immune function.

Cognitive Health:

The Cretan Diet, with its focus on omega-3 fatty acids from fish and antioxidants from fruits and vegetables, may contribute to cognitive health and a lower risk of age-related cognitive decline.

Balanced Macronutrients:

The diet emphasizes a balance of macronutrients, including carbohydrates from whole grains, proteins from lean sources, and healthy fats from olive oil. This balanced approach supports overall nutritional needs.

Cultural and Social Aspects:

The Cretan Diet is not just about food; it also incorporates a cultural and social aspect. Meals are often shared with family and friends, contributing to a positive social environment that can influence overall well-being.

CRETAN DIET AND MEDITERRANEAN DIET WHICH ARE THE ODDS?

The Cretan diet and the Mediterranean diet share many similarities, as both are rooted in the traditional dietary patterns of the Mediterranean region. However, there are some distinctions between the two, primarily based on regional variations and local culinary practices. Here are some key differences:

- **Emphasis on Olive Oil:**

Both diets place a strong emphasis on the consumption of olive oil, which is a staple in the Mediterranean region. However, the Cretan diet is known for particularly high olive oil consumption, often exceeding the levels seen in other Mediterranean countries.

- **Herb and Spice Usage:**

The Cretan diet may incorporate a unique blend of herbs and spices specific to the island, influencing the flavor profiles of dishes. While herbs and spices are common in the broader Mediterranean diet, the specific varieties used can vary by region.

- **Wild Greens and Foraged Foods:**

The Cretan diet historically includes a variety of wild greens and foraged foods, reflecting the island's diverse landscape. This emphasis on locally foraged foods may distinguish it from other Mediterranean diets.

- **Dairy Consumption:**

The Cretan diet traditionally includes moderate consumption of dairy products, such as cheeses and yogurt. The types of cheeses and dairy preparations can vary, contributing to the unique characteristics of the diet.

- **Wine and Alcohol Consumption:**

Both diets allow for moderate consumption of wine, usually with meals. While the types of wine may vary, Cretan wines are known for their quality and may play a prominent role in the local diet.

- **Fish and Seafood Varieties:**

Due to its island location, the Cretan diet places a significant emphasis on fish and seafood. The specific varieties of fish and seafood consumed may differ from other Mediterranean regions.

- **Grains and Bread:**

Both diets include a variety of whole grains, but the specific types of grains and bread may vary. In Crete, traditional bread varieties and local grains may be more prominent.

- **Legumes and Pulses:**

Legumes and pulses are common in both diets, providing a source of protein and fiber. However, the specific types of legumes used in traditional Cretan dishes may differ from those found in other Mediterranean cuisines.

- **Culinary Influences:**

The Cretan diet has been influenced by a history of diverse cultural interactions, including Minoan, Venetian, Ottoman, and other influences. These historical interactions have shaped the unique culinary identity of the region.

- **Cultural Practices:**

Local cultural practices, including traditional festivals, customs, and celebrations, contribute to the overall culinary experience in Crete. These cultural aspects may differentiate the Cretan diet from the broader concept of the Mediterranean diet.

It's important to note that both the Cretan diet and the Mediterranean diet share core principles of emphasizing whole, unprocessed foods, promoting a plant-based diet, and incorporating healthy fats. The differences lie in the specific regional variations and culinary traditions that have developed over time.

OLIVE OIL & OLIVES

If the first three great secrets of Cretan gastronomy are the harmonious blend of produce used, the simplicity of the finest dishes and the ingenuity of the local people, the other great secret goes by the name of virgin olive oil: no other cooking fat is used in the traditional diet of the Cretans. Even their desserts are usually prepared with olive oil, rather than with butter. What's more, the entire island is effectively a vast olive grove, with 30-40 million trees.

According to official international statistical data, each Cretan consumes more than 35 liters of olive oil annually – more than any other population group. In Italy and Spain, the other main olive oil-producing Mediterranean countries, the average is just 10.5 liters!

When, in the late 1950s, American nutritionists came to Crete to examine the phenomenon of Cretans' longevity, they couldn't believe their eyes! 'How much oil they consume, my God,' exclaimed the internationally renowned doctor and pioneer in nutrition, Ancel Keys, as he saw the green salad drenched in an abundant amount of olive oil. Essentially, Keys reiterated what almost all explorers who showed interest in the daily lives of Cretans had noticed during the previous centuries. Today, it is believed that olive oil is the greatest secret of Cretan nutrition and Cretan longevity. Medical research conducted and ongoing in Europe and America





reveals that olive oil not only protects the heart but also helps the proper functioning of many organs and beneficially affects a wide range of diseases.

The quality of Cretan Olive Oil is known worldwide. Because it is not an industrial but a natural product that comes from a simple crushing of the olive, without extracts and enhancers. It is a product cultivated with care and passion and is packaged pure and natural by businesses that show their respect for both the product and the consumer.

Olive oil was the main source of fat in the diet of Cretans. About 40% of the total calories consumed came from fat, mainly from olive oil.

Cretan oliviculture, the cultivation of olive trees, is a key aspect of agriculture on the island of Crete, Greece. Olive trees have been an integral part of Cretan culture, economy, and landscape for centuries. Cretan oliviculture represents a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation, showcasing the island's commitment to sustainable agriculture and the preservation of its rich cultural heritage. The olive tree continues to be a symbol of life, peace, and prosperity on the island of Crete.

Olive cultivation on Crete has a rich history dating back to ancient times. The olive tree is considered sacred, and olive oil has been a staple in Cretan households for cooking, lighting lamps, and in religious rituals.

Crete's Mediterranean climate, characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters, is well-suited for olive cultivation. The island's terrain, with its hills and valleys, provides diverse microclimates that contribute to the cultivation of high-quality olives.

Crete is home to various olive varieties, each with its unique characteristics. Some notable varieties include Koroneiki, Tsounati, and Mastoidis. The Koroneiki olive, in particular, is renowned for its high-quality oil and is one of the most widely cultivated varieties on the island. Traditional cultivation practices, often passed down through generations, involve terraced groves and low pruning to allow easier harvesting. Many olive groves are still maintained using traditional, manual methods.

Talking about the circular economy, olive products extend beyond oil. Cretans also use olives for table consumption, pickling them in various ways. Additionally, olive leaves are used for herbal teas, and olive wood is employed in traditional crafts.

The olive tree landscapes of Crete, with their silver-green leaves, contribute also to the island's scenic beauty. Olive groves cover vast areas of the island, creating a distinctive and iconic feature of the Cretan landscape.



TSIKOUDIA

Those who have found themselves in a “kazani” in Crete, meaning present during the production of tsikoudia (otherwise known as “Cretan raki,” a grape-based pomace spirit) in homes, courtyards, or other spaces that are not distilleries, know that the process takes the form of a celebration, a Dionysian revelry. The same witnesses might agree that traditional distillation should be considered as one of Greece’s examples of intangible cultural heritage. Especially in Crete, where making tsikoudia is a point of reference for social coexistence, encounters and shared joy, it is primarily a cultural process rather than just manufacturing.

The process for Cretans is the same as it was centuries ago. They keep the same method as it is part of Crete culture and history. First, the skins and seeds of grapes after being compressed (usually stepped as part of the tradition) , are kept for about 40 days in barrels where the fermentation is done.

The Raki cauldron is consisted of three basic parts. There is the pot, the lid and a pipe, used for the transfer of the steam. When it is the time of production, the producer puts the grapes marc with water in the cauldron. The fire is lit beneath the cauldron and the marc starts simmering. The fire must be nor so strong nor too low. The intensity of the fire is important so as not the marc to be burned.

During boiling, the alcohol of the marc is evaporating. The steam circulates in the pipe of the cauldron. At the external of the pipe there is cold water, so the steam condenses into a jar drop by drop. These are the first drops of Cretan Raki, called “Protoraki”.

The quality is measured by the Celsius degrees that is boiled. Usually a high quality raki is boiled at 20 degrees. The process of distillation is finished once all the grapes descent to the desired level in the cauldron.

THE CRETAN DECALOGUE OF RAKI

The excessive consumption of raki creates intoxication, which sometimes causes unpleasant situations. That’s why Cretans have wrote this humorous Decalogue of Raki that you should keep in mind:

The first glass of Raki brings appetite

The second health

The third brings joy

The fourth happiness

The fifth brings excitement

The sixth, chatter

The seventh brings fight

The eighth brings the police

The ninth brings the judge

And the tenth, funeral

It is the king of drinks, not only for its delicious flavor, but also its pureness, as it has no dyes and industrial alcohols. It gladdens our heart and mind, dismisses our obsessive thoughts, stimulates the appetite, contributes to easier digestion. Warm Raki or “Rakomelo”, if mixed with honey and a little bit of cinnamon, helps you keep warm in the winter, while icy Cretan Raki can be served as a refreshment after or before a meal.



HERBS

They grow everywhere in the mountains, cultivated lands and coastal areas. Several of them are endemic, and have been known since ancient times for their medicinal properties. Today, their use is of course limited, but everyone will drink in the winter a malotira, a dittany or a sage. It is not easy to overlook the fact that the special taste of Cretan food is due to the use of some aromatic herb. Botanical studies show that Crete has one of the richest and most interesting ecosystems in Europe, with a huge number of endemic (native only to Crete) plants. For example, Malotira (*Siderites syriaca*) and Diktamos (*Oreganum dictamnus*), the latter known in antiquity for its antiseptic properties.

Several herbs are utilized from the past for their medicinal properties. These herbs generally grow in the inland mountain ranges; they are harvested by experienced collectors, dried naturally and packaged in for later use without including further chemicals or other additives.

For centuries, these herbs have infused the Cretan air with their aromas, and they are present from the coastal areas of the island up to altitudes of 2000 meters. Herbs that grow naturally throughout the island, herbs that

in some cases you will find in Crete and nowhere else in the world, herbs that we find in our organic lands. It is difficult to distinguish the most important of them, however among the first that come to mind and the smell of our childhood are the ones we drank as herbal tea in our grandmothers' houses, they are the ones that lovingly flavored every culinary creation of our mothers. Malotira, dittany, marjoram, ladiania, sage, oregano, rosemary, and thyme.

Each of the herbs of Crete has its own history associated with the traditions and beliefs of the inhabitants of the island. Multiple generations have proven the many uses and benefits for the human body from consuming them, and the modern scientific community has certified these benefits in recent years.



REST

WILD GREENS

Wild greens constitute perhaps the greatest asset in Cretan cuisine. No one knows exactly how many different species of plants are used for human consumption, but more than 120 have been identified. They grow everywhere, from coastal zones to high mountain regions.

One of the great advantages of Cretan cuisine is its simplicity, the purity of its flavors. Spices and aromatics are used very sparingly and heavy cream almost never, so that each ingredient can maintain its distinctiveness.

There are dozens of culinary processes for wild greens, for vegetables and pulses, devised to make the most of all the different treasures that nature could offer. The famous Cretan wild green pies, for example, are prepared using multiple combinations of wild greens, depending on the season and the local flora, so that the result smells wonderful.

If one were to ask a local how many different types of wild greens she needed to make a pie, she would probably laugh and answer: “As many as nature can provide.” Yet not all will do. Those that have a powerful scent will be used in moderation, and those that have a bitter taste will never be used in a pie, where sweet, mild-tasting wild greens dominate; it is from these sweeter greens that the harmony of a simple yet ever so important and prized dish will emerge. The bitter-tasting wild greens are, of course, highly sought after on Crete as well, but for different dishes.

- **Amaranth (*Amaranthus spp.*):**
Amaranth leaves, known as “vlita” in Greek, are tender and mild in flavor. They are often used in salads or boiled and served with olive oil and lemon.
- **Dandelion Greens (*Taraxacum officinale*):**
Dandelion greens, called “radiki” in Greek, are bitter and slightly peppery. They are commonly used in salads, pies, or cooked and served with olive oil and lemon.
- **Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*):**
Chicory, known as “sikalida” in Greek, has slightly bitter leaves. It is often boiled or used in salads, and its bitterness is balanced by the addition of olive oil and lemon.



- **Wild Mustard Greens (*Brassica* spp.):**
Wild mustard greens, called “stamnagathi” or “kritama,” are a popular horta in Crete. They have a slightly bitter taste and are often sautéed with olive oil and garlic.
- **Beetroot Greens (*Beta vulgaris*):**
The young leaves of beets, known as “panzaria,” are used as horta. They are tender and have a mild flavor, often prepared by boiling or sautéing.
- **Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*):**
Purslane, called “glistrida” in Greek, has succulent leaves with a mild, lemony flavor. It is often used in salads or cooked dishes.
- **Nettle (*Urtica dioica*):**
Nettle, known as “tsouknida,” is blanched to remove the stinging hairs and then used in various dishes such as pies, soups, or boiled and served with olive oil and lemon.
- **Sow Thistle (*Sonchus* spp.):**
Sow thistle, called “stamnagathi” in certain regions, is a type of thistle with tender leaves. It is often boiled or used in salads, and its bitterness is offset by the addition of olive oil and lemon.
- **Fennel Greens (*Foeniculum vulgare*):**
Fennel fronds, known as “maratho,” are used as horta and have a mild anise flavor. They are commonly used in salads or cooked dishes.
- **Wild Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*):**
Wild radish, called “riganada,” has peppery leaves and is often used in salads or boiled and served with olive oil and lemon.
- **Wild Celery (*Apium graveolens*):**
Wild celery, known as “selino,” has tender leaves with a mild celery flavor. It is used in salads, pies, or cooked dishes.
- **Chard (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *vulgaris*):**
Chard, called “selgina,” is a leafy green with colorful stems. It is often used in pies, salads, or cooked dishes.

SNAILS

Snail consumption has a long tradition in Cretan cuisine, dating back centuries. Snails, known as “chochlioi” in Greek, are enjoyed in various culinary preparations and are considered a delicacy by many Cretans. Traditionally, snails are foraged from the wild, especially in the countryside and rural areas. During the rainy season, snails become more active, and this is when they are often collected for culinary use. Some families may also maintain small snail farms.



The consumption of snails in Crete is often associated with specific seasons, particularly the late autumn and early winter when snails are more abundant. This seasonality contributes to the traditional nature of snail consumption.

Snails are prepared in various ways in Cretan cuisine. One popular method involves cooking them with a flavorful mixture of olive oil, herbs, garlic, and sometimes tomato. The dish is often called “chochlioi boubouristi.” Snails are also used in stews, pies, or mixed with pasta.

Different regions of Crete may have their own unique recipes and variations for preparing snails. Families often pass down their preferred methods and spice blends for cooking snails, contributing to a diversity of local preparations.

The consumption of snails is not just about the food; it’s also tied to social and cultural events. Snail gatherings, where families and friends come together to enjoy this delicacy, are common during the season.

While snail consumption has deep historical roots, it is also integrated into modern Cretan cuisine. Some restaurants and chefs in Crete feature snail dishes on their menus, often with contemporary twists. The tradition of foraging for snails aligns with principles of sustainability and local sourcing. This practice relies on the abundance of wild snails in the natural environment, reducing the need for intensive farming methods. Snail consumption is more than just a culinary tradition; it holds cultural significance in Crete. It represents a connection to the land, a celebration of local ingredients, and a shared experience within the community.

CHEESES

Crete is known for its rich tradition of cheese making, and the island produces a variety of distinctive cheeses, each with its own unique flavor profile and characteristics. Here are some notable Cretan cheeses:

Graviera:

Graviera is one of the most popular and widely consumed cheeses in Crete. It is a hard cheese made from sheep's milk, sometimes blended with goat's milk. Graviera has a firm texture and a slightly sweet, nutty flavor. It can be enjoyed on its own or used in cooking.

Mizithra:

Mizithra is a fresh cheese made from a combination of sheep's and/or goat's milk. It is soft and creamy with a mild, slightly sweet taste. Mizithra is versatile and can be used in both sweet and savory dishes. It is often crumbled over salads or desserts.

Anthotyros:

Anthotyros is a fresh, soft cheese that is similar to mizithra. It is made from sheep's or goat's milk and has a mild, delicate flavor. Anthotyros is commonly used in Cretan cuisine in salads, pies, and desserts.



Kefalotyri:

Kefalotyri is a hard cheese made from sheep's or goat's milk, sometimes a combination of both. It has a firm texture and a tangy, salty flavor. Kefalotyri is often used for grating and is a common ingredient in traditional Greek and Cretan dishes.

Xinomyzithra:

Xinomyzithra, also known as "sour mizithra," is a type of soft cheese with a slightly tangy taste. It is made by allowing mizithra to ferment, resulting in a more pronounced flavor. Xinomyzithra is used in both savory and sweet dishes.

Pichtogalo Chanion:

Pichtogalo Chanion, also known as "Chania's strong milk," is a traditional Cretan cheese made from sheep's milk. It is a matured cheese with a strong flavor and a crumbly texture. Pichtogalo Chanion is often enjoyed with bread or as part of a cheese platter.

Kasseri:

Kasseri is a semi-hard cheese made from sheep's milk, often with some goat's milk added. It has a smooth texture and a slightly tangy flavor. Kasseri is commonly used in Greek and Cretan cuisine, including dishes like saganaki.

Manouri:

While not exclusive to Crete, Manouri is a semi-soft, fresh cheese made from the whey of sheep's or goat's milk. It has a creamy texture and a mild, milky flavor. Manouri is often used in salads or desserts.

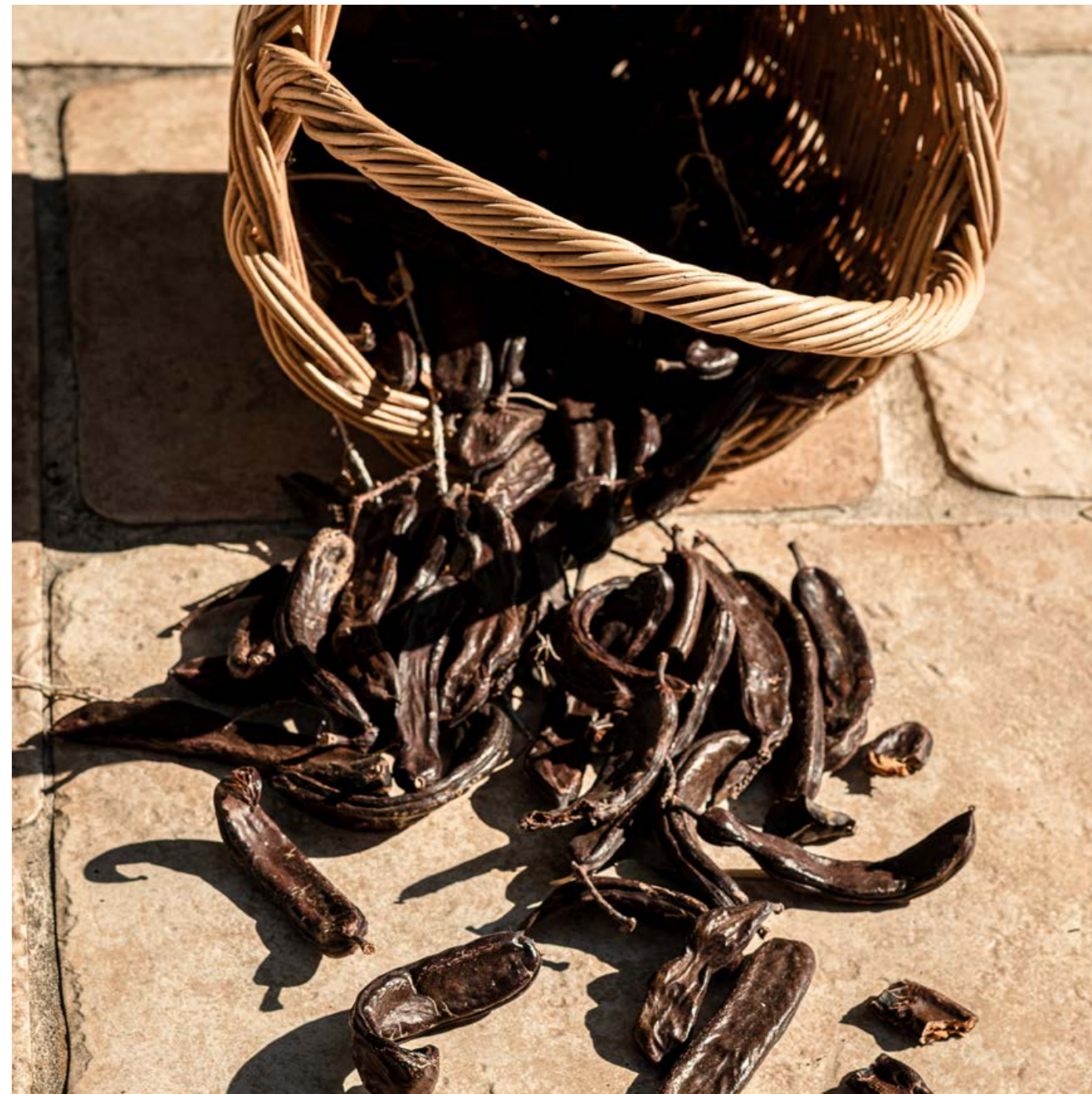
Staka:

Staka is a traditional Cretan dairy product made from the fat extracted from sheep's milk. It has a thick, buttery consistency and is used as a spread or topping for bread and other dishes. Staka is often combined with eggs and herbs to make a dish called "staka with eggs."

CAROB

The carob tree, known as “Koukies” in Greek, is native to the Mediterranean region, and its pods have been utilized for various purposes, including food and medicinal applications. Historical and agrihistorically, carob cultivation has been an important part of Cretan agriculture. The trees are well-suited to the Mediterranean climate and are resilient in arid conditions. Carob cultivation has contributed to the sustainable use of land and resources. Carob trees are well-adapted to the Cretan landscape and are often planted for soil conservation. Their deep roots help prevent soil erosion, making them valuable in sustainable agricultural practices. Harvesting carob involves collecting the ripe pods from the trees. The pods are then processed to extract the syrup or ground into flour. Traditional harvesting practices are often a communal activity, with families and communities participating in the seasonal gathering of carob pods.

The tradition of carob in Cretan cuisine reflects the island’s connection to its natural environment, the resourcefulness of its people, and the cultural significance of certain foods in shaping local culinary practices. While modern culinary trends and preferences evolve, carob remains an enduring element in Cretan gastronomy. The use of carob in Cretan cuisine contributes to the preservation of culinary heritage. Traditional recipes that incorporate carob provide a link to the island’s cultural history and the resourcefulness of its people in utilizing locally available ingredients. One of the most common uses of carob in Cretan cuisine is in the production of carob syrup, locally known as “Koukounari” or “Petimezi.” The syrup is made by boiling and reducing the juice extracted from carob pods. It has a sweet and rich flavor, somewhat similar to molasses. Carob syrup is often used as a sweetener in desserts, drizzled over yogurt, or even added to savory dishes for a touch of sweetness. Carob syrup is frequently used in the preparation of traditional Cretan desserts. It can be incorporated into cakes, cookies, and pastries, adding a distinctive flavor to these sweet treats. Additionally, carob powder may be used as a cocoa substitute in certain recipes. Carob pods can be ground into a flour-like substance, often referred to as “Manna” or “Brusko.” This carob flour is gluten-free and has a naturally sweet taste. It can be used in baking, blending into smoothies, or as a substitute for cocoa or chocolate in various recipes. In addition to its culinary applications, carob has been used traditionally for its perceived health benefits. It has been used to address digestive issues, as it is believed to have mild laxative properties. Carob pods were also historically consumed as a remedy for coughs and sore throats. Carob pods have been used as animal feed, particularly for livestock. The pods are nutritious and provide a source of energy for animals. In traditional agricultural settings, carob trees have played a role in supporting local livestock. The carob tree holds cultural significance in Cretan traditions and symbolism. It is often associated with longevity and resilience due to the tree’s ability to thrive in challenging environmental conditions. The carob tree has also been considered a symbol of fertility.



QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS LABELS OF RAW MATERIALS

GREEK MARK

Certified products and services for the “Greek Mark”.

For Cretan products:

<http://www.greekmark.gov.gr/Home/SearchProducts>

ELGO DIMITRA has been designated as the responsible body for awarding the Greek Label to milk and dairy products and for this reason it conducts checks on the companies concerned in order to verify their compliance with the requirements of the legislative framework and their registration in the “Electronic Register of Greek Products and Services”.

In addition, ELGO carries out checks on the market in order to ensure the correct use of the Hellenic Mark on these products. Every interested company submits an application to ELGO DIMITRA, for the awarding of the Hellenic Mark to products it markets under its brand name.

Companies that are certified by ELGO DIMITRAS for the production and/or packaging and/or marketing of Greek PDO cheeses are automatically entitled to the use of the Greek Mark.



A product that bears the logo of the Home Craftsmen Network of Crete, automatically means that the product is:

“Proven, Local, Safe, Healthy, Legal Product, produced through Collectiveness, with an Environmental and Social Approach”.

The logo “OIKOKTIMITATA OF CRETE” represents:

- Local Product of VEGETABLE origin, whose ingredients from raw materials of Cretan origin amount to more than 80%, as will be seen from the analysis of its recipe.
- A Local Product of ANIMAL origin is considered to have come from the milk of an animal that has been fed animal feed, which is cultivated in the Region of Crete in a percentage of at least 70%.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPEMENT COMPANY PLOIGOS TRADEMARKS “OIKOKTIMITATA OF CRETE” AND “0 KM”

The Network’s trademark is attached to the final Home Improvement product of each producer in order to provide the consumer with the guarantee that the product has been produced following all the procedures adopted by the Crete Home Improvement Network and described in the Network’s statutes.



The “0 km” logo, products 0 (zero) kilometers, represents:

The distinctive logo “0 km” - 0 (zero) kilometer products as the ultimate local product, emphasizes the pro-environmental approach of Home Technical products, with a zero carbon footprint on the environment and represents:

- Local Product of VEGETABLE origin, whose ingredients from raw materials of Cretan origin amount to 100%, as will be seen from the analysis of its recipe.
- A Local Product of ANIMAL origin is considered to have come from the milk of an animal that has been fed animal feed, which is 100% cultivated in the Region of Crete.

Cretan cuisine is known for its simplicity and emphasis on fresh, seasonal ingredients. Traditional Cretan dishes are often made with olive oil, herbs, vegetables, and grains, and are a reflection of the island's unique geography and climate.

DAKOS

Many still make paiximadi (rug) today, but no one makes paiximadi like the Cretans! Not without reason, the Cretan nut is today a "protected geographical indication product". Rugs in Crete are a way of life! "Kritharokouloures (Barley rolls), dakoi, from wheat, from barley, aftozimo or heftazimo or ftazimo rug (that means that it ferments "on its own", it doesn't contain sourdough or yeast), names that refer to the distant or even the recent past, when the necessities of life did not allow the Cretan household to leaven its bread every day. Double baking removed the water from the bread, made it hard but also tastier, it could be kept for many weeks or even months. And the Cretans had found many ways of exploiting their rugs. Dakos is famous.

One of the most famous Cretan dishes is dakos, a salad made with barley rusk, tomatoes, feta cheese, and olive oil. This dish is simple yet flavorful, and is often served as a light lunch or appetizer.

This tradition has never been uprooted from Crete. Today, every professional bakery prepares rugs and in recent years a competition has begun to be observed, who will prepare the best!



PIES

Another popular Cretan dish is kalitsounia, small pies filled with cheese or herbs. These pies can be sweet or savory and are often served as a snack or dessert. Other traditional Cretan dishes include staka (a creamy sauce made from sheep's milk butter), boureki (a pie made with zucchini and potatoes), and gamopilafo (a rice dish made with lamb or chicken).



OFTO

"Ofito" meat. That is, meat grilled on coals. The shepherds of Psiloritis do not wait for coals to cook their ofito, as is done in the rest of Greece. That is why in Psiloritis the meat of the year is called "Antikristo", because it is cooked facing the fire. They open a small pit in the ground where they light the fire, spread large pieces of meat on spits that they make at that time and place them on stones around the fire, to be cooked with the temperature released by the burning of the wood. That is, they are very hasty. This rush can be easily explained: it has its roots in the years of slavery. Spitting required fire, and the fire with its smoke betrays the position of the one who lights it. The "Chainides," the rebels of old, had to hurry, because they lived in constant pursuit. The shepherds in Madaras followed another tactic in roasting the ofito. They dug a somewhat deeper pit and waited for only the coals to be made. In Sfakia who did not have the fear of the conquerors, because the conquerors never lived in the unfathomable mountains and gorges of Sfakia, so they never roasted the meat with the flame of the wood, just as they did not put stones around the pit of the ofitos.

- It is food from the cuisine of the mountains (the countryside) and is not urbanized because it is normally cooked in the countryside.
- It is a festive, exceptional dish (that is, it is made exceptionally, not every day).
- It presupposes gathering, it is never cooked for one person!

KAKAVIA

Seafood is also an important part of Cretan cuisine - mostly of the coastal populations of Crete, as inland and especially in the most distant villages, it was a rare food-, thanks to the island's proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. Some of the most popular seafood dishes in Crete include grilled octopus, fried calamari, and stuffed squid, but the identitarian fish dish is the Kakavia the fish soup that takes the name from the tool used to catch the kind of fishes used for the recipe. Kakavia (a type of fish soup) is perhaps the most widespread and well-known fisherman's food in the entire Greek island area. In Crete, from the east to the west, the recipes vary, but overall it is a very tasty and healthy food, especially loved by the inhabitants of the seaside areas of Crete.

PILAFI

The traditional Cretan pilaf is served at weddings, engagements, and baptisms. Especially if you try it in a household of a Cretan village you will have a unique taste experience. The rice symbolizes the deep roots of marriage and, the couple's fertility. The presence of rice at weddings is a custom since ancient times in Greece. The wedding pilaf was first cooked in Western Crete but over the years it became the most famous wedding dish on the entire island! According to tradition, the men prepared the pilaf, not the women.

Every Cretan family had a "gamopilafo specialist" who was in charge of the dish at family weddings. The men of the family and their friends together with the chief "specialist" brought from their houses very large pots where they boiled the meat and kept the broth.



In Crete, as in many other regions with a strong cultural and religious identity, the relationship between gastronomy and the Orthodox Christian religion is intertwined. The local cuisine of Crete has been shaped not only by geographical factors but also by the historical and cultural influences of the Orthodox Christian tradition. While the relationship between gastronomy and the Orthodox religion in Crete is complex, it highlights the integral role that food plays in expressing cultural identity, celebrating religious traditions, and fostering community bonds. The rich culinary heritage of the island is deeply intertwined with its religious and cultural history. Some aspects of the relationship between gastronomy and the Orthodox religion in Crete can be sum up with:

1. Fasting Traditions:

- Lenten Period: The Orthodox Christian calendar includes periods of fasting, most notably during Lent leading up to Easter. During these times, adherents abstain from certain foods, particularly animal products. Cretan cuisine, with its emphasis on plant-based dishes, aligns well with these fasting traditions.

2. Use of Olive Oil:

- Symbolic Significance: Olive oil is a staple in Cretan cuisine and is often considered a symbol of purity and anointing in the Orthodox Christian tradition. Olive oil is used abundantly in cooking and as a dressing for various dishes.



3. Seasonal and Local Ingredients:

- Harvest Celebrations: The agricultural cycle is often celebrated in the context of the Orthodox Christian calendar. Festivals and feasts coincide with the seasons, reflecting the availability of seasonal and local ingredients in Cretan dishes.

4. Religious Celebrations and Feasts:

- Special Foods: Certain dishes are prepared specifically for religious celebrations and feasts. These may include traditional sweets, bread, and other festive foods.
- Community Gatherings: Religious events often bring communities together, and food plays a central role in these gatherings. Shared meals are a way of fostering community and expressing hospitality.

5. Monastic Influence:

- Monastic Products: Monasteries in Crete have historically played a significant role in agricultural production. Many monasteries produce olive oil, wine, and other agricultural products. The use of these products is often associated with a sense of purity and authenticity.

6. Culinary Traditions and Rituals:

- Preparation of Holy Bread: The preparation of holy bread or “prosfora” is a ritual in the Orthodox Christian Church. Bread, a fundamental component of Cretan cuisine, has symbolic importance in religious ceremonies.
- Wine in Religious Rituals: Wine, a significant product in Crete, is also used in religious rituals, including the Eucharist.

7. Cultural Identity:

- Preservation of Tradition: The preservation of traditional Cretan culinary practices is often intertwined with a broader effort to maintain cultural and religious identity.
- Symbolism in Food: Certain foods and culinary practices carry symbolic meanings related to religious themes, reinforcing cultural and spiritual connections.

8. Philoxenia (Hospitality):

- Religious Virtue: Hospitality is a virtue emphasised in the Orthodox Christian tradition. The warm and generous hospitality found in Cretan homes and eateries reflects this cultural and religious value.

MUSIC

In Crete, the relationship between music and gastronomy is deeply ingrained in the island's cultural fabric. Traditional Cretan music, with its lively rhythms and soulful melodies, often accompanies communal gatherings and festive occasions, creating an immersive experience tied to gastronomic traditions.

During local celebrations, such as weddings or festivals, music becomes a vital component of the overall atmosphere, enhancing the enjoyment of traditional Cretan cuisine. The connection is not only about sound; it extends to the shared emotions, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging fostered by both music and food.

In tavernas and restaurants, live music performances may complement the dining experience, providing a multisensory journey for locals and visitors alike. The fusion of traditional sounds with the rich flavors of Cretan dishes contributes to a holistic cultural experience, where music and gastronomy intertwine to celebrate the island's heritage.



For festive occasions in Crete, traditional Cretan music takes center stage. The sounds of the lyra, a bowed string instrument, combined with the accompanying lute and laouto (a type of lute), create a lively and rhythmic atmosphere. These traditional instruments, often played by skilled musicians, produce melodies that reflect the island's rich cultural history.

Dances like the syrtos and pentozali are commonly performed during festivities, accompanied by the spirited tunes of Cretan music. The music not only serves as entertainment but also as a means of bringing people together, fostering a sense of community and celebration.

Whether it's a wedding, a local festival, or another joyous event, the vibrant and festive notes of Cretan music enhance the overall experience, making it a vital element of celebratory occasions on the island.

CERAMIC

Undoubtedly, Crete is the richest in ceramic art among all Greek regions and presents a unique, continuous tradition and progressive stability over the past 4 millennia. Cretan ceramics of prehistoric and historical antiquity, the first and second Byzantine periods, takes shape with absolute equality and harmony, in relation to the inherited legacy. Potters in Crete can be categorized into two general groups: those in urban centers and those in rural areas. There are four ceramic centres in Crete, one per prefecture. The reasons for the development of ceramics in these specific villages at the end of the Middle Ages are not known. Indeed, Crete has abundant sources of clay, and any other place would have been equally suitable. Individual potters in provincial villages are exceptions, while potters in centers are a minority compared to their total population. In Nochia Chania and Kentri Lasithiou, potters live permanently in the village and produce medium-sized objects that they distribute to the wider area using pack animals. The products of Kentri, located near Ierapetra, are loaded onto boats and reach the fertile plain of Messara by sea. Potters of Thrapsano in Heraklion and Margarites in Rethymnon produce small quantities of objects in their kilns. However, during the summer months (May–September), they migrate throughout Crete in small groups of specialists, similar to medieval guild nomads. The group (ventemiardes or takimi) consists of: the Master (Magister = teacher), responsible for selecting the area and space where they would work throughout the summer. He was also a potter specializing in making containers. The Sotomaster (Sto = under), a potter specializing in smaller vessels. The Chomatias, a specialist in clay extraction, transportation, and preparation. The Kaminiaris, collector of wood and firewood for the kiln, controlling the fire throughout the pottery process. The Trocharis, who manually operated the potter's wheel, a small, low wheel on which the containers were shaped. The Kouvalitis, usually a young child, assistant to the Chomatias and Kaminiaris, taking care of the pack animals and various tasks. The installation site must have clay and water. The six men cook and



sleep outdoors for five months during the good (economic) harvest. The containers are made to order from one or more pairs and transported from the potter's location to the client's house in a neighboring village. Small items are loaded onto donkeys accompanied by the Kouvalitis and Trocharis or the Chomatias.

SHAPES AND DECORATIONS

Shapes and decorations of traditional Cretan ceramics largely originate from the adventurous period of Turkish rule. Glazing was abolished from the 18th century, as was sealed decoration on fresh vessels. A simplified form of coloured decoration with shades ranging from chestnut red to black clay, common in Crete since the Minoan period, has been preserved. Despite the simplicity, the forms remain rich compared to pottery in the rest of Greece. Ninety different basic types of ceramic objects corresponding to specific uses have been recorded. Examples include the jar, which has five functional forms: oil jar, wine jar, honey jar, medium-sized jar, and small jar. The same applies to jugs, jars, basins, flasks, beehives, small containers, etc.

WEAVING

Crete's connection with weaving goes back to the mythological times of the Minoans when Princess Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, came up with a clever way to lead Theseus back out of the labyrinth caves once he killed the Minotaur who was terrorizing the people of Crete.

The art of triopatitiro, or triple-weaving, is a traditional weaving technique in Crete, Greece, used to create distinctive and intricate patterns on textiles, including tablecloths. Triopatitiro involves a complex triple-weaving process where three sets of threads are woven together to create intricate patterns. This technique allows weavers to achieve a level of detail and sophistication in their designs. Traditional Cretan weavers use natural materials such as cotton or linen to create their textiles. The choice of material often depends on the intended use of the finished product.

Triopatitiro is known for its geometric and often symmetrical patterns. Traditional motifs and symbols inspired by Cretan culture and nature are commonly woven into the fabric. These can include symbols representing fertility, protection, or elements from the natural environment. The color palette used in triopatitiro weaving is often inspired by the local environment. Earthy tones such as browns, greens, and blues are common, reflecting the natural landscapes of Crete. Certain traditional motifs are frequently incorporated into triopatitiro designs.

These may include symbols such as the double-headed eagle, a common motif in Cretan folk art representing power and freedom. Weaving, including the art of triopatitiro, has deep cultural significance in Crete. It is a craft that has been passed down through generations, with skilled artisans preserving and evolving traditional techniques. The art of triopatitiro requires a high level of skill and craftsmanship. Weavers often spend years honing their techniques and perfecting their ability to create complex and detailed patterns. Weaving, including the art of triopatitiro, is considered an essential part of Cretan cultural heritage. The textiles created through these traditional techniques not only serve practical purposes but also act as carriers of cultural identity and history. The art of triopatitiro is a legacy to the skill and creativity of Cretan weavers. Through this traditional weaving technique, artisans continue to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the rich cultural heritage of Crete. The resulting textiles, adorned with intricate patterns and symbolic motifs, tell a story of craftsmanship, tradition, and the vibrant cultural identity of the island.



In Crete, Greece, the tradition of places for consuming food is deeply rooted in the local culture. Each type of establishment, whether it's a taverna, cafenion, or estiatorio, is a pillar to the rich culinary and social experience on the island. Different types of establishments contribute to the diverse and vibrant culinary landscape of Crete, offering locals and visitors a range of options to experience the island's traditional flavours and warm hospitality.

Kafeneio: a public gathering place for mostly men, of a casual nature, where one does not go with the intention of eating but to drink coffee and play games such as backgammon. As a drink there they drank mainly cognac while eating nuts like peanuts (that's why it is more associated with the bar). After 1970, when raki was established as a drink (not a good drink, but a local one), the raki meze appeared in the cafe.

Cafe-ouzeri: a tradition brought by the refugees from Asia Minor when they immigrated to Crete at the beginning of the 20th century. There you used to go and go (to the ones that still exist) for the purpose of socializing but also to drink alcohol-ouzo (that is, it is a store that opens for culinary consumption as opposed to a coffee shop). This automatically means you'll eat the mezes of ouzo, as it's a difficult drink (to metabolize), requiring its own ritual of pacing and alternating between mezes. Coffee-ouzeri was and usually is in areas where the refugees settled.

Mageriko (cookhouse): folk shop where the common, mass population goes to eat mainly cooked food but not with the intention of drinking. You can go alone or with friends.

Restaurant: an urban space where people clearly go to eat alone or with friends, and perhaps to pair their food with a drink. Usually the more affluent go.

Tavern: A tavern is a place where one goes both to eat and almost certainly to drink (usually wine) and presupposes gathering, either prearranged or occurring on the spot. Everyone goes there (townspeople, farmers, low-wage earners, everyone in general). In a way it combines/is between the cookhouse and the restaurant.





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www.agroxenia.org



WINES OF CRETE

Functioning as core production of bottled wines, Prefecture of Heraklion, provided the initial impulse for what would then develop into Wines of Crete. The creation of the Heraklion Winemakers' Network urged the creation of the Chania - Rethymnon Winemakers' Network two years later. Subsequently, Prefecture of Lasithi joined the network of Heraklion's, resulting in the achievement of the first goal, which was none other than the consistent promotion of Cretan wine not only within the island but to other places as well. The two networks proceed in operating in autonomy, yet cooperating at all levels in parallel. All under the umbrella of Wines of Crete and a collective scheduling of activities. The main objectives of the whole action are two. On the one hand, the promotion and recognition of Cretan wine, both inside and outside Greece now, and on the other, the development of wine-tourist mainstream on the island, taking advantage of a series of 'tourist' advantages the island displays. The education of the consumer and the professional, the presentation of the production to the very audience through organized tastings and exhibitions, the creation of all the necessary tools for the finest achievement of such communication, consist of the actions of Wines of Crete.



WE DO LOCAL

We do local is a philosophy under which a company operates:

- by spreading the local customs & traditions;
- by introducing local cuisine;
- by supporting local producers;
- with respect to the environment and sustainability;
- by supporting the local workforce.
- We do local meets the need of going back to our roots and having a better quality of life.
- Company wise, We do local fulfills the need to differentiate in substance and quality, as well as to support the economy and workforce of the local community.

Customer wise, We do local fulfills the need to try a product offering the real experience of the visiting place, the locals, and the raw materials they produce. In addition, We do local fulfills the need to act sustainably and respect the environment.

The Certification Standard We do local.

As a certification standard We do local , was created by the mature cooperation of Local Production and Hospitality SA (promotional services), Cosmocert SA (certification services) and Local Food Experts sce (integrated development services):

- intends to highlight companies that follow a modern and necessary business approach;
- is expressed through all operations and services offered, operating and supporting local production and hospitality;
- supports, recognizes and rewards other certification standards including them in the qualification criteria (i.e. ISO, Haccp, Travelife, etc.);
- inspection, evaluation and potential certification of units happens on an biennial circle.

www.wedolocal.gr

RESEARCH & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Throughout the last years, a wide range of educational programs and research projects on the subject of the Cretan diet have been launched and are still ongoing.

University faculties, schools, local authorities, together with the lifelong learning centers, other associations and professional clusters are willing to implement such projects and this becomes quite apparent since the number of such actions are numerous.

In Crete at university level there are departments, courses and research projects directly or indirectly related to the study of nutrition. The most notable examples are:

HELLENIC MEDITERRANEAN UNIVERSITY

- Department of Nutrition and Dietetics.
- International workshop "The Cretan Diet as a way of life – Olive Oil" (in cooperation with the University of Coventry the Faculty of Health and Life Science) – 4/2023.



UNIVERSITY OF CRETE

- School of Medicine
Nutrition course

HIGHER SCHOOL OF TOURISM EDUCATION OF CRETE

Introduction to cooking – Food guiding

There is also a vast number of research projects that are implemented by the Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas (FORTH) in Crete which is the premier multidisciplinary research institution in Greece with well-organized facilities, highly qualified personnel and a reputation as a top-level research institution worldwide. Among these, there are some dedicated to the nutrition and the Cretan diet such as the Research project: Advanced Research Activities in Biomedical Technology & Agri-Food.

There are also schools that implement programs on the Cretan diet periodically so that education on a healthier lifestyle can start early.

SUCH PROJECTS ARE:

The Cretan diet and cuisine project by the Vocational senior high school of Akrotiri, Chania in cooperation with the Science Center & Technology Museum (NOESIS) in the frame of the project “A new beginning for the Vocational Senior High School” and the Erasmus+ / Educational project about the Cretan diet implemented by the 60o primary school of Heraklion where 20 educators from other countries, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Turkey and France experienced the Cretan diet (2017).

- **Ambassadors** picture and sentence about commitment from each one
 - Katerina (owner Avli Restaurant - Rethymnon)
 - The monk (Toplou Monastery-Sitia)
 - Nikos Frantzeskakis (Agroxenia-Vamos)
 - Panagiotis Magganas (owner Peskesi Restaurant & Organic Farm - Heraklion)
 - Stelios Trilirakis - Ntounias (Chania)
 - Nikos Psyllakis - writer, journalist
 - Izabella Zampetaki, journalist
 - Sevasti Krasanaki
 - Stefanakis Aleksandros geote
 - Marianna Kavroulaki
- **Scientific Committee** picture of each one
 - Kostis Christakis (Director of Knosos - British School at Athens)
 - Katerina Athanasaki (Head of the Department of Exhibitions, Education and Public Relations)
 - Theodora Mouratidou (Associate Professor at Hellenic Mediterranean University - Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, School of Health Sciences) **ή Ζερβάκη**
 - Aris Tsantiropoulos (Associate Professor in Social Anthropology, University of Crete, Department of Sociology)
 - Giorgos Nikolakakis (Associate Professor of Social Anthropology, Dept. of Philosophy and Social Studies, University of Crete)
 - Mathaios Frantzeskakis (Manager of the company “Cultural Society of Crete”)
 - Katerina Moniaki
 - **Πυρίντσος**
 - **ΜΑΙΧ**
 - **Ιατρική**
 - **Τουρισμός - Πολυτεχνείο ή/και Απλαδάς Γιώργος - ΕΛΜΕΠΑ**
 - **ΙΤΕ**
 - **ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ**
 - **Εκπαίδευση 1βαθμια - 2βάθμια**

Signatory stakeholders to the candidacy of Crete for European Region of Gastronomy



Educational Development Company PLOIGOS



Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region of Crete



Department of Nutrition & Dietetics Sciences
Hellenic Mediterranean University

“Faculty of Nutrition & Dietetics”
Hellenic Mediterranean University



Δήμος Σιτείας
Municipality of Sitia

Sitia Municipality



Agricultural Cooperative of Rethymno



Heraklio Hoteliers Association



IGCAT - International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism

Cretan Women in Business Association

The future of Cretan gastronomy is a balance between preserving traditions while embracing innovation. While traditional Cretan dishes have stood the test of time, there is also room for creativity and experimentation in the kitchen. Chefs and cooks on the island are finding new ways to incorporate traditional ingredients and techniques into modern dishes.

At the same time, it is important to preserve the cultural heritage and sustainability of Cretan cuisine. This means continuing to use local and seasonal ingredients, supporting small-scale agriculture, and preserving traditional methods of food preparation. It also means educating future generations about the importance of these practices and encouraging them to carry on the culinary traditions of their ancestors.

Technology can also play a role in the future of Cretan gastronomy. For example, digital platforms can be used to promote traditional Cretan dishes and connect consumers with local producers. Social media can be used to share recipes and cooking tips, while online marketplaces can help support small-scale farmers and producers.

The future of Cretan gastronomy is about finding a balance between tradition and innovation. By embracing new ideas while preserving cultural heritage and sustainability, Cretan cuisine can continue to thrive for generations to come.

Sustainability in gastronomy tourism in Crete involves promoting practices that contribute to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the region. Several key aspects have been considered by local association and institutions:

- **Local Sourcing and Farm-to-Table Practices:**
 - Encourage restaurants and food establishments to source ingredients locally, supporting local farmers and producers.
 - Promote the use of traditional, seasonal, and indigenous products in culinary offerings.

PESKESI - FARM AND RESTAURANT

- **Culinary Education and Preservation of Traditional Techniques:**
 - Offer culinary workshops and programs that educate tourists about Cretan cuisine, its history, and traditional cooking methods.
 - Support initiatives that aim to preserve traditional recipes and culinary techniques unique to Crete.

EVENTS EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPEMENT COMPANY PLOIGOS MARGARITES

- **Waste Reduction and Recycling:**
 - Implement waste reduction strategies in restaurants and food-related businesses, such as composting organic waste and recycling materials.
 - Encourage the use of sustainable packaging and utensils to minimize environmental impact.
- **Energy Efficiency:**
 - Promote the use of energy-efficient appliances and practices in kitchens to reduce energy consumption.
 - Support restaurants and accommodations that use renewable energy sources.
- **Community Engagement and Inclusivity:**
 - Involve local communities in gastronomy tourism initiatives, ensuring that the benefits are shared with the broader population.
 - Encourage cultural exchange programs between locals and tourists to foster mutual understanding and appreciation.

HERAKLION GASTRONOMY DAYS

- **Promotion of Responsible Tourism:**
 - Advocate for responsible tourism practices among visitors, emphasizing the importance of respecting local cultures and environments.
 - Promote low-impact tourism experiences that showcase the beauty of Crete without causing harm to its ecosystems.
- **Certifications and Standards:**

- Encourage restaurants and tourism-related businesses to obtain certifications such as Green Key or other sustainable tourism certifications.
- Establish and enforce standards for sustainable gastronomy practices.

- **Biodiversity Conservation:**

- Support initiatives that focus on preserving the biodiversity of Crete's ecosystems, including its agricultural and natural landscapes.
- Promote sustainable fishing practices to protect marine resources.

- **Cultural Heritage Preservation:**

- Highlight the importance of preserving cultural heritage related to food and gastronomy.
- Support initiatives that showcase the cultural significance of Cretan cuisine and its role in the local identity.

- **Collaboration and Networking:**

- Foster collaboration between local businesses, government agencies, NGOs, and the tourism industry to create a unified approach to sustainable gastronomy tourism.
- Establish networks that share best practices and support each other in implementing sustainable initiatives.

EVENTS

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LOCATION OF FESTIVAL AND EVENTS



Cretans have always loved arts and events through which they can come into contact with their social environment and share their emotions. On summer nights, various cities of the island organise art exhibitions and festivals of theatre, music, film and dance. Concerts are performed in stadiums, archaeological sites, on the Venetian walls of Heraklion and Chania or in small theatres in the countryside. The religious celebrations are always framed with Cretan music and dance in village squares or near the churches, reviving the customs of the Minoan ages.

The region of Crete supports financially the important festivals and celebrations of the island and participates as a co-organiser in many of them.

Festival and events that are organised by the municipalities are supported by the region of Crete and stand out all over Crete are:

1. Heraklion Gastronomy Days

Heraklion

2. Cretan street cooking food

Agios Nikolaos

3. Cretan nutrition fest

Rethimno

4. Rural August

Chania

5. Amari Green Festival

Amari area villages

6. Earth festival - people and products

Chania

7. Kissamos culture festival

Kissamos beach

8. Cretan Food Culture

Margarites of Mylopotamos (with the participation of 14 villages), Municipality of Mylopotamos, Rethymno

The celebrations and gastronomy and cretan cuisine events, often are identified with the locally produced product that characterises the area, such as:

Citron festival - Garazo Rethimno

Honey festival - Drakona Chania

Raki festival - Heraklion

Olive oil and olive tree festival - Kolimvari Chania

Shepherd's and cheese festival - Zoniana Rethimno
Sfakia pie festival - Sfakia

Eftazimo bread festival - Kroustas Lasithiou

Eftazimo bread festival - Kastamonitsa Heraklion

Potato festival - Tzermiado Lasithiou

Wine festival - Dafnes Heraklion

Mizithra pie festival - Kritsa Lasithiou

Fish festival - Souda Chania

Zucchini festival - Avrakonte Lasithiou

Stafidoelia festival - Marathos

Carob festival - Pines Lasithiou

Cherry festival - Gerakari Amariou

Trahanas festival - Alatsata Heraklion

Meatpie festival - Meskla Chania

Watermelon festival - Charakas Heraklion

Nut festival - Gonies PEDIADOS

Grape festival - Asimi Heraklion

Sardin festival - Chania

Chestnut - Chania

PARTNERSHIP WITH EUROPEAN AND WORLDWIDE NETWORKS

Iter Vitis Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

La Route de l'Olivier Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

Unesco Creative Cities for Gastronomy

UNWTO

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THIS LIST FOR 2024\2025\2026 INCLUDING LOCAL, SPECIFIC AND IGCAT EVENT WITH DIFFERENT COLORS AND TYPOS

Division of responsibilities at the territorial level and drafting of the quality criteria required to be part of the project (companies, events, municipalities, etc.) - JANUARY APRIL 2024

- 1.1 Creation of quality criteria requirements to get the CERG label and launch of the campaign to become
- Ambassador CERG
 - Supporter SERG
 - Area Coordinator Affiliated restaurant/winery/agriturismo upon subscription to the values card/list of requirements School/Training Institute or University

1.2 Launch of the idea competition to incorporate CERG into new events and events already scheduled with innovative formulas that fall within the challenges indicated by IGCAT: elimination of single-use plastics, food waste, healthy eating for teenagers, better quality and sustainable tourism, better capacity for the use of international languages, and storytelling - May 2024

PARTICIPATION INTO THE PLATFORM MEETING OF IGCAT

- 2.1 Brand dissemination events in different areas of Crete summer autumn 2024
- With the help of ambassadors, coordinators, and supporters, and the organizations that have already shown interest, we will organise meetings to gather new proposals and nominations for initiatives and events to be scheduled.

2.2 Meetings with school principals and university contacts to plan pilot actions or support already scheduled actions and include them in the calendar with the integration of specific activities for the promotion of CERG and its values. In this case, activities related to the IGCAT

challenges: elimination of single-use plastics, food waste, healthy eating for teenagers, better quality and sustainable tourism, better capacity for the use of international languages, and storytelling

PARTICIPATION IN FOOD CREATIVE GIFT AWARD

2.3 Meetings with public stakeholders related to major events.

2.4 Agreement with archaeological sites and museums with a close relationship with agri-food production.

2.5 Planning small-scale environmental campaigns in collaboration with relevant entities to create pilots to be replicated throughout the region (e.g., plastic collection in a municipality, cleaning of an archaeological or monumental site).

PROMOTION ACTIVITIES ABROAD

3.1 Cultural

3.1.1 Involvement of institutions/associations part of international networks (e.g., UNESCO Sites Association, Cultural Itineraries, Paths) to gain visibility at their international meetings.

3.2 Commercial

3.2.1 Participation in agri-food sector trade fairs with adequate communication and support from public and private stakeholders.

3.3 Touristic

3.3.1 Agreement for the participation of 3 foreign influencers in major scheduled events with adequate territorial distribution

3.3.2 Possibility of being present with informational material or a CERG corner at all sector fairs

PROMOTION ACTIVITIES NATIONALLY

4.1 Cultural

4.1.1 Involvement of institutions/associations part of regional and national networks for presence during major events

4.2 Commercial

3.2.1 Campaign to promote the use of local products in HORECA

3.2.2 Corners in supermarkets

3.2.3 CERG labelling on some symbolic products

4.3 Touristic

3.3.1 Targeted summer promotions in tourist flow transit areas/agreement with a rent-a-car company

3.3.2 Possibility of being present with informational material or a CERG corner at all sector fairs

3.3.3 Cross-communication on the website and social media of tourism promotion entities using the same claims

IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE COMMUNICATION RELATED TO THE ACTION PLAN

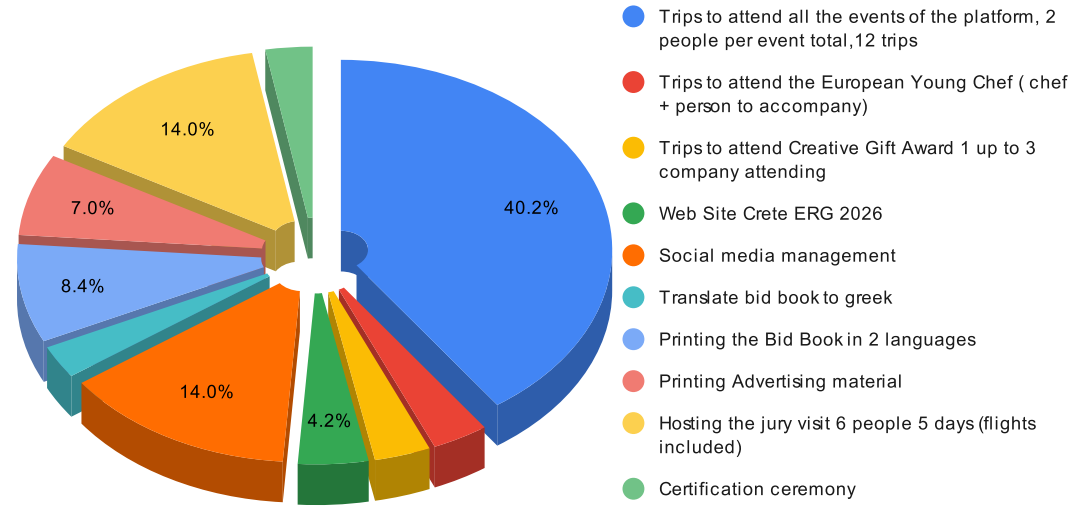
5.1 Creation of an online calendar with an integrated map of Crete that becomes a symbol of the project and the values of democracy and sharing: each group member can enter events and activities and geoposition them (they will be visible online after approval by the site moderator). Events will be for 2024 and 2025, and each event will correspond to social media visibility. While for 2026 we will reproduce the same scheme adding also

LOCAL EDITION OF EYCA

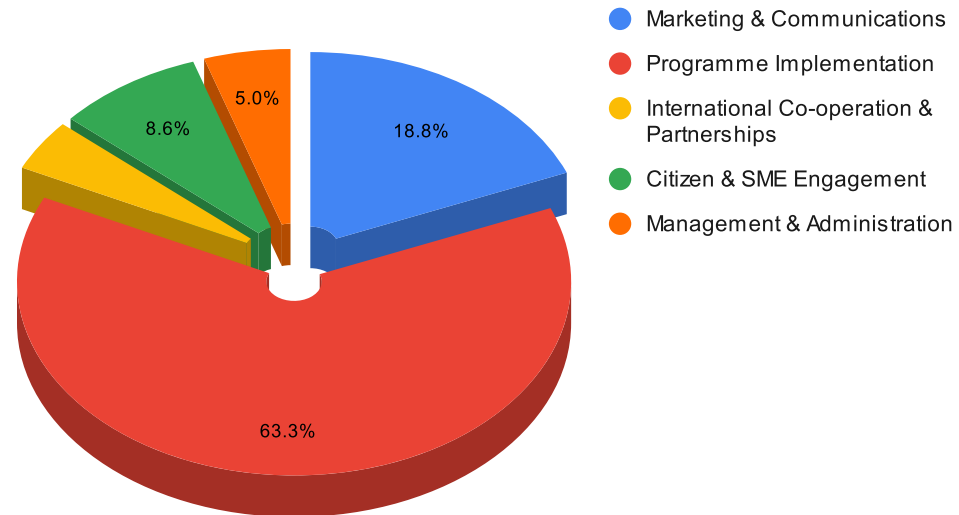
LOCAL EDITION OF CREATIVE GIFT AWARD

PLATFORM MEETING

Budget 2024 - 2025 € 95.000,00



Budget 2026 € 11.690.000,00



NOTE
