

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
Lead researcher of the “Lyon Heart Study”



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AIMS



AIMS OF THE CANDIDATURE AND LINK WITH IGCAT VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

OUR AIMS	IGCAT values, principles and purposes
<p>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.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>Be part of an International platform and attend the initiatives of the platform will be a powerful tool to work as a the team to show the Cretan identity, to share the strengths and be inspired from other regions experiences.</p>
<p>Enhance the Cretan diet in its uniqueness and free it from overlapping with the Mediterranean diet.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Protect the heritage of Cretan gastronomic culture and pass on its legacy to the new generations.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>Encourage the use of local products by tourism and catering operators.</p>	<p>→</p> <p>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.</p>

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. 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, pancretan Non-Profit Educational Developement Company Ploigos (in agreement with the Region of Crete), 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.

The Cretan gastronomy has rich and deep historical heritage that dates back thousand years that reflect its strategic location in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Minoans, who flourished on the island between 3000 BC to 1450 BC, were known for their use of olive oil, grains, legumes, honey and wine, which is still present in the Cretan cuisine today. Additionally, 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.



02

CRETAN DIET AND HEALTH: THE “HEART” OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET



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The intricate interplay between genetic predisposition and environmental influences shapes an individual's health, with diet emerging as a pivotal environmental factor that exerts continuous influence throughout one's life. In this context, the island of Crete has been a focal point since 1948, when the Rockefeller Foundation responded to the post-war call by the Greek government to address the perceived “poor” living conditions of the Cretan population. The ensuing assessment, surprisingly, revealed a nutritionally adequate diet among Cretans, well-adapted to the natural and economic resources of the region. The spotlight on Cretan diet and health intensified with the groundbreaking Seven Countries Study initiated in the early 1960s by American researcher Ancel Keys. This landmark epidemiological study, spanning 25 years and involving 13,000 men across seven countries, aimed to unravel the relationship between diet and cardiovascular diseases. The study unequivocally highlighted Crete as a region with the best health conditions and the lowest mortality rates from heart disease and cancer compared to other populations. Based on the results of the seven-country study, among other factors, Ancel Keys coined the term “Mediterranean diet” to describe the dietary pattern followed by the people of the Mediterranean countries. Precisely because the results of the study highlight the Cretan Diet as the crown of longevity among the rest of the countries, it is considered the heart of the “Mediterranean Diet”, which made Greece famous in nutrition matters, leading experts around the world to turn their attention to “Phenomenon of Crete” as it was called, thanks to the longevity of the island's population. Subsequent research, such as the Lyon Heart Study by French researchers Serge Renaud and Michel de Longenil, underscored the therapeutic potential of a Cretan-style diet. Administering this diet to post-heart attack patients resulted in a significant reduction in mortality rates and cancer incidence, emphasizing the enduring impact of the Cretan Diet on health and well-being.

According to the world-renowned Professor of Preventive Medicine and Nutrition at the University of Crete, Mr. Antonios Kafatos: «The excellent health and longevity of the Cretans is attributed to their traditional diet. This diet is simple and includes mainly olive oil which provided approximately one third of the daily energy per person». While most of the energy came from cereals, mainly bread, legumes, vegetables, fruits and rarely in small amounts from eggs, cheese, milk, fish and a little red wine at each meal.

The main characteristics of their diet were:

- the low consumption of saturated fat and red meat;
- the high intake of monounsaturated fats (mainly through olive oil);
- its high content of antioxidants and vitamins.

BASIS OF THE CRETAN NUTRITION

- Extra virgin olive oil as the exclusive and main source of fat, covering 1/3 of the daily calories.
- Daily consumption of seasonal and local fruits, legumes, vegetables, endemic wild herbs and aromatic plants, unprocessed cereals, is the basis of the Cretan diet.
- Consumption of dairy products almost daily but in small to moderate amounts.
- Consumption of poultry and fish on a weekly basis in moderate quantities.
- Consumption of red meat only a few times a month.
- Moderate alcohol consumption, mainly red wine with meals.
- Eating fresh fruit as a daily dessert and traditional honey-based sweets a few times a week.

Seasonality and locality are also important aspects of the Cretan diet. As shown by the data of the studies carried out, the Cretans who participated generally consumed seasonal foods, little or no processing, which were products of the wider area where they lived, parameters that almost completely determined their dietary choices.

As can be seen from the above, scientific validation adds a level of credibility to the time-tested health benefits of the Cretan Diet. However, what is also important to emphasize is that these benefits do not arise only from the nutrition (raw materials, quota and frequency of consumption) but from the whole of the Cretan diet, i.e. the Cretan way of living. Cretan diet extends beyond the act of eating, embodying a holistic approach to life that integrates physical activity, socialization, and a unique cultural perspective on food. In Crete, meals transcend mere sustenance; they become occasions for companionship. This communal aspect of eating together reflects a cultural richness that permeates every facet of Cretan life. As we navigate the complexities of modern existence, the Cretan Diet beckons us to reconsider not only what we eat but how we live. It challenges the prevailing paradigm of isolated dietary interventions and invites a comprehensive reevaluation of our relationship with food, community, and the environment. As we seek solutions to contemporary health challenges, the wisdom embedded in this ancient dietary tradition offers a timeless guide-one that transcends fads and quick fixes, urging us to embrace a holistic approach that nourishes both body and mind.

In conclusion, some advantages of following the Cretan Diet:

- **Cardiovascular & Longevity:**

The Cretan Diet's monounsaturated fats from olive oil benefit heart health, potentially extending lifespan through balanced, nutrient-dense eating. Regular consumption of fish, fruits, and vegetables supports overall cardiovascular well-being.

- **Chronic Disease Defense:**
Emphasis on fresh produce, whole grains, and olive oil lowers the risk of chronic diseases, including cancer, diabetes, and neurodegenerative conditions. The diet's diverse antioxidants contribute to disease prevention.
- **Weight & Inflammation Management:**
High fibre and healthy fats aid weight control, while omega-3s reduce inflammation. Portion control is integral to the Cretan Diet, promoting a balanced, anti-inflammatory lifestyle.
- **Holistic Health Approach:**
The diet supports metabolic health, bone strength, and cognitive well-being. Antioxidant-rich nutrition protects against oxidative stress, and gut health is promoted, positively influencing digestion and immune function.
- **Balanced Nutrition:**
The Cretan Diet's macronutrient balance—carbs from whole grains, proteins from lean sources, and healthy fats—addresses overall nutritional needs. Incorporating calcium-rich dairy and leafy greens further enhances bone health. The diet's omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants contribute to cognitive health, reducing the risk of age-related decline.
- **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.

ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY



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 osteoarchaeology 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.



Charred olives stones found at Kamara (modern Ayios Nikolaos) dated in the Roman period (published in Moniak 2020).



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 mizithra cheese) are a popular dessert during Easter.

Also, there are dishes connected to a ritual cycle, such as the "polyspora" (multiseeds) which are dishes of autumn and the beginning of winter because they are connected to the plowing and sowing of the land. There are the salty "polyspora" called "palikaria" which includes all kinds of legumes and grains, and the sweets "polyspora" which have raisins, nuts, grains and fruits. The "polyspora" dishes also include the funeral ritual offerings such as the "koli-va" which are made with wheat, sesame, powdered sugar, chickpea flour, almonds, walnuts, raisins, pomegranate seeds, cinnamon, cloves and spearmint or parsley.

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





Gastronomy is not only about food as such or cooking techniques, but is a dynamic cultural phenomenon. The environment, nature, geography, climate, historical and cultural traditions, social structure and social relations (gender role, social stratification, etc.) are some of the factors that shape Cretan gastronomy over time. Like any complex gastronomy, it rests on a central trunk which branches out from the variety and its variations. Cretan gastronomy is insular, it shows similarities and differences with other culinary systems both insular and continental in the Greek area. It is also Mediterranean, since it is also interconnected with other culinary cultures of the wider Mediterranean area through a timeless historical communication in the formation of which trade, migrations and conquests have played an important role.

In any case, Cretan cuisine is subject to a series of divisions which shape distinct roles as well as its gender division. A distinction could be made between domestic and public kitchens, where the domestic kitchen is the kitchen of everyday eating where women lead/dominate, while the public kitchen is more casual and seems to place more emphasis on the role of



men. Of course, partial variations can exist both in the domestic and in the public kitchen through festive, religious or other important events. Thus, gastronomy accompanies the entire life cycle and marks events such as birth, baptism, coming of age, marriage, death, where we can see a series of symbolic combinations and differentiations.

Cretan cuisine, like any cuisine, forms its unity through its diversity. This is due both to the geomorphology of Crete and to the micro-local environments which allow us to see interesting variations of Cretan cuisine from Sitia to Chania, from the seaside to the continental area, from the mountain to the plain, from the agricultural or livestock emphasis some local communities. What we call the Cretan diet today and defines the culinary identity of the island, is a practice that was historically linked to the agricultural area when the main activity of the inhabitants was the agricultural economy. Thus, Cretan cuisine is formed in an immediacy between primary production (agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, food gathering), its immediate processing and consumption, which also shaped the manners of the table. Its main characteristic was its topophagic character, which made it seasonal within the registration of a natural cycle of production, transformation and consumption of the products. This aspect of Cretan gastronomy which is related to the rural area, produces a cuisine that is relatively simple, although varied, which is based on highlighting the raw materials, which can be consumed raw or cooked without complex culinary and gastronomical compositions. On the contrary, Cretan “urban” gastronomy, while influenced by the rural area and its tradition, is more open, receives influences from the outside, incorporates culinary fashions, some of which are re-exported to the rural area. This unity of society, place, production, consumption with reference to the nuclear family, the extended family group and the community, ensured an intergenerational cohesion of Cretan cuisine. Today, an attempt is being made to preserve or revive this even though its traditional unity has been disrupted.

In terms of the nutritional model, Cretan cuisine is based on the Mediterranean trinity of products, that is, grains/legumes, vines and olives, a basic staple that is constantly on the table in the form of bread and rugs, wine and raki, edible olives and olive oil which is a basic raw material of Cretan cuisine. It is also based on an abundant consumption of wild greens and vegetables, wild or tame and cultivated, while the presence of aromatic herbs is also important. Ultimately, what is called Cretan cuisine is co-shaped by various factors such as rural and urban space, seasonality, locality, religious and secular holidays, fasting and abundance of consumption, necessity and invention.



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 Chondrolia, Tsounati and Koroneiki. 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.

CEREALS, LEGUMES, FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Cereals and their products, legumes and fruits and vegetables formed the basis of the Cretan diet. Cereals mostly unprocessed and whole grains derived from wheat and barley. Bread, rugs and “chondros” (cracked-coarsely ground wheat) are consumed in large quantities. The main legumes consumed are white beans, kidney beans, chick-peas, lentils, fava beans and peas. As for vegetables, many species are consumed in large quantities and always in season: spinach, cabbages, green beans, zucchini, tomatoes, eggplants, leeks, celery, onions, radishes, cauliflowers, okra, peppers, turnips, radishes, and lots of wild mountain greens. Fruits are also consumed in large quantities and seasonally: oranges and tangerines mainly in coastal areas, grapes, apples, melons, pomegranates, figs, peaches, apricots, pears, quinces, plums and the cherries. Dried fruits are also consumed, mainly dried figs and raisins. All the above foods are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals and many antioxidant components, and are associated with many beneficial actions in the body. Increased intake of plant-based foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes, helps gut function and protects against cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity.





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. The cultural element “The Wild Edible Greens of Crete - Ethnobotanical Practices” has been included in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.

Indicative wild greens eaten raw, boiled, in pies or stews:

- Stamnagathi (*Cichorium spinosum*)
- Radikio (*Cichorium intybus*)
- Maratho (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- Zohos (*Sonchus* sp.)
- Kafkalithra (*Tordylium apulum*)
- Staflinakas (*Daucus carota*)
- Pentanevro (*Plantago lanceolata*)
- Ahatzikas or mironi (*Scandix pecten-veneris*)
- Lagoudohorto (*Prasium majus*)
- Galatsida (*Reichardia picroides*)
- Kritamos (*Crithmum maritimum*)
- Agoglossi (*Cynoglossum creticum*)
- Hiromourides (*Hypochoeris cretensis*)
- Avronies (*Bryonia cretica*)
- Lapatha (*Rumex obtusifolius*)



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, ladanina, 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.

Dittany / Diktamos or Erontas (*Origanum dictamnus*)

Sage / Faskomilo (*Salvia fruticosa* / *Salvia pomifera*)

Marjoram / Mantzourana (*Origanum microphyllum*)

Malotira / Cretan Mountain Tea (*Siderites syriaca*)

Oregano / Rigani (*Origanum vulgare*, ssp *hirtum*)

Thyme / Thymari (*Thymus capitatus*)

Savory / Throumba (*Satureja thymbra*)

Chamomile / Chamomili (*Marticaria chamomila*)

Ladanum / Aladanos (*Cistus incanus*, ssp *creticus*)



CHEESES

Crete is known for its rich tradition of livestock and cheese making, and the island produces a variety of distinctive cheeses, each with its own unique flavor profile and characteristics. The cultural element “Shepherding and the shepherd’s world in Psiloritis” has been included in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.

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.



Xigalo of Sitia:

Cheese with a creamy texture made exclusively in Sitia. The taste is similar to Xynomizithra and Chania curd. It has a rich taste, slightly sour and fresh.

Tyrozouli:

Traditional cheese from domestic sheep and goat farming. It is prepared from boiled milk and thickened with sour cream, vinegar or even fig milk instead of milk. Lightly salted or unsalted with an elastic texture.

Malaka:

It is the curd resulting from the first stage of graviera cheese making. It is elastic and homogeneous and is used exclusively in pies and especially the Chaniotiki cake made with 4 cheeses, lamb and mint.

Anthogalo:

Anthogalo is a velvety cream, something between yogurt and milkshake, made from whole sheep's milk. An excellent side dish for dolmades, meatballs and all oily dishes, it is also suitable for country dishes, while with a little honey it becomes a dream dessert.

Tulumotiri:

The Cretan "feta". Tulumotiri has a sub-sour, slightly spicy taste and soft texture, and is produced from sheep and goat milk. For its ripening, it is placed in tulumia, i.e. inverted animal carcasses with the hairs facing the inside so that they touch the cheese.

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 is indigenous to the Mediterranean region, and its versatile pods have served various purposes, from culinary to medicinal applications. Embedded deeply in Cretan agriculture, historical and agrihistorical perspectives highlight the importance of carob cultivation, offering sustainable land use and resource management. Thriving in the Mediterranean climate and arid conditions, carob trees play a vital role in preventing soil erosion, contributing to sustainable agricultural practices on the island. Harvesting carob involves collecting ripe pods, subsequently processed into syrup or ground into flour. This communal activity reflects Cretan tradition, where families and communities engage in seasonal pod gatherings. In Cretan cuisine, carob stands as a timeless element, showcasing the island's ties to nature, the ingenuity of its people, and the cultural importance of certain foods in shaping culinary practices. Amid evolving culinary trends, carob remains a constant in Cretan gastronomy, preserving culinary heritage. The carob syrup is utilized in traditional recipes as a sweetener for desserts, yoghurt drizzles, or savory dishes. Carob's culinary versatility extends to its powder which is gluten-free with a natural sweetness. This flour-like substance finds application in baking and as a cocoa or chocolate substitute. Beyond its culinary uses, carob addresses digestive issues and has mild laxative properties. Additionally, carob pods, recognized for their nutritional value, have been employed as animal feed. The cultural symbolism associated with the carob tree in Cretan traditions reflects notions of longevity and resilience, owing to the tree's ability to flourish in challenging environments. Moreover, it embodies fertility, adding cultural depth to the significance of carob in Cretan heritage.

The cultural element "The agro-food tradition of carob in Crete" has been included in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.





WINE & 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.

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.



QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS LABELS OF RAW MATERIALS AND SERVICES

1. PDO & PGE QUALITY CERTIFICATIONS

PDO

“Designation of origin” means the name that identifies a product:

- a. which originates from a specific place, region or, in exceptional cases, country;
- b. whose quality or characteristics are due mainly or exclusively to the particular geographical environment including the inherent natural and human factors;
- c. of which all stages of production are carried out within the defined geographical area.



PGE

“Geographical indication” means the name that identifies a product:

- a. which originates from a specific place, region or country
- b. of which a certain quality characteristic, reputation or other characteristic can be attributed mainly to its geographical origin
- c. of which at least one of the stages of production is carried out within the defined geographical area.



Plant-based Production			
A/A	County- company headquarters	Kind of product	Number of Businesses
1	Chania	PDO Olive Oil	41
2		PGE Olive Oil	48
3		PGE Rug	3
4		PDO Orang	5
5		PGE Raisin	1
6	Rethymno	PDO Olive Oil	28
7		PGE Olive Oil	1
8		PGE Rug	1
9	Heraklion	PDO Olive Oil	134
10		PGE Olive Oil	11
11		PGE Rug	5
12		PDO Edible Olive	3
13		PGE Raisin	12
14		PGE Melekouni	1
15	Lasithi	PDO Olive Oil	71
16		PGE Olive Oil	7

Animal based production

A/A	County- company headquarters	Kind of product	Number of Businesses
1	Chania	PDO Graviera cheese of Crete	5
2		PDO Pichtogalo cheese of Chania	3
3		PDO Xinomizithra cheese of Crete	1
4		PDO Cretan pine honey	8
5	Rethymno	PDO Graviera cheese of Crete	13
6		PDO Pichtogalo cheese of Chania	1
7		PDO Xinomizithra cheese of Crete	6
8		PDO Cretan pine honey	3
9		PDO Manouri cheese of Crete	1
10		PDO Feta cheese of Crete	1
11	Heraklion	PDO Graviera cheese of Crete	9
12		PDO Cretan pine honey	8
13		PDO Xinomizithra cheese of Crete	6
14	Lasithi	PDO Cretan pine honey	3
15		PDO Xygalo cheese of Sitia	1

2. AGRONUTRITIONAL COOPERATION OF REGION OF CRETE

The “Agronutritional Cooperation of Region of Crete” is an initiative of the “Region of Crete” and it is a non-profit company.

The main advantage of the organization is its institutional role, as it works at the service of the farmer, the processor, the trader, the craftsman, the local community and the products in general, ensuring a relationship of solvency and stability between them. Among other actions that it plans and implements or in which it participates, regarding the raw materials of the island, their certification and promotion:

- The program “The European Food Masters – Taste the authentic” launched by the Agro-nutritional Cooperation is a comprehensive action for the projection of Cretan products, focusing on three categories of products: P.D.O. (Protected Designation of Origin), P.G.I. (Protected Geographical Indication) and Organic Products. The campaign aims, through a series of multiple actions, at the promotion, the recognisability and subsequently the consumption of P.O.P., P.G.E. and organic products in the domestic as well as in the German market.
- It has created and consolidated the brand “crete – land of values”, “cretan cuisine”, “cretan grocery”, “cretan brunch”, “cretan taste” and “open wineries». It decisively and effectively contributes to the certification of the value of the products, thus increasing their demand in the hotels of Crete and generally to an overall projection of the Cretan Diet. By interlinking the primary sector with tourism, it supports the gastronomic and wine tourism of the island.



AGRONUTRITIONAL
COOPERATION

REGION OF CRETE

LABELS OF THE AGRONUTRITIONAL COOPERATION OF REGION OF CRETE RELATED TO LOCAL RAW MATERIALS

The Label “crete”

Since the year 2012, the Region of Crete and the Agronutritional Cooperation established the brand “crete”, aiming to make the local products bearing this brand recognizable and even more competitive in terms of trade, while acquiring a strong commercial identity on the national and international markets.

The brandname “crete” manages to differentiate the agricultural products and generally the food of the island thanks to their production quality standards, their standardization, their supply level and their proper promotion and makes them stand out in the preferences of the consumers.

108 local products-enterprises have been standardized with the label “crete”.



“Cretan grocery stores”

The “Cretan grocery” label certifies the retail outlets of Cretan products, which meet all the specifications, allowing the consumer to feel confident and secure about his purchases, as he chooses quality products with high nutritional value. In these stores, local products are available with the “Crete” label, further strengthening their commercial identity. Therefore, the “Cretan grocery” label highlights and promotes retail stores, as it guarantees the origin and quality of the products.





“Cretan taste”

The need to create the “Cretan taste” brand was the result of a joint effort to highlight the island’s culinary culture and at the same time promote local products to the island’s visitors.

This sign “highlights the corner” of the buffet of the central restaurant of all-inclusive hotels, with local recipes, prepared with Cretan quality products produced on Cretan land.



“Cretan cuisine”

The Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region of Crete, wishing to promote and accentuate the local cuisine and Cretan gastronomy, created the brand “cretan cuisine”.

Mass catering businesses, such as restaurants, taverns, hotel restaurants and agro-tourism lodges that offer the special flavors of Cretan gastronomy and, of course, the unique Cretan hospitality, are renowned and rewarded by acquiring the “cretan cuisine” brand.

The primary objective is to render the “cretan cuisine” brand as a seal of approval for consumers and to bring the primary sector of the island into direct contact with tourism, thus giving added value to the island of Crete and promoting it as the first in line gastronomic destination for all visitors.

Cretan Brunch

“Have a piece of Crete with you everywhere at all times”

A snack or second breakfast is a light meal that is consumed between breakfast and lunch. It must be healthy, nutritious and easy to carry since it is going to be eaten out of your home.

Here in Crete most memories that come to mind when we hear the word “dekatiano” (a snack eaten around ten o’ clock) are those of a hard-working farmer who starts out for the day as soon as the sun rises with his traditional woven colourful “vourgia” on his back that is filled with paximadi, cheese, olives and tomatoes. When the sun rises high and “starts to burn” the time has come for a quick break.

The second breakfast or “dekatiano” as it is called in Greece is part of the culinary culture of our island. Therefor the choices follow the principles and values of the Cretan diet.

Keeping this in mind and focusing on the healthy Cretan nutrition, as well as on showcasing the main products of our land, we created the modern “Cretan Brunch” and adapted it to today’s needs and requirements.

A light meal with the taste and flavours of Crete. With recipes based on olive-oil, vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and lettuce, cheese such as graviera and anthotyro and traditional cold cuts such as apaki and syglino, olives and the traditional dry bread “paximadi”.

Open Wineries

The brand-label “open wineries” highlights the sites of the island’s wineries which are accessible to the public, as part of an integrated plan to promote Cretan gastronomy.

Furthermore, with winery labeling, the Agronutritional Cooperation aims to develop wine tourism on the island through the promotion of local wine and indigenous varieties.



3. PLOIGOS TRADEMARKS

“ΟΙΚΟΚΤΙΜΑΤΑ 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. 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 “ΟΙΚΟΚΤΙΜΑΤΑ 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%.

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.



4. AKOMM - PSILORITIS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Agreement of Quality – Local Commercial Sign

The Development of Local Agreement of Quality reflects the will of the enterprises and organizations of Psiloritis' area to cooperate. The main objective is the establishment of minimum functional standards that create a special agro-touristic product named "Psiloritis – Crete". These standards concern the functional lows, the dishes, the quality and the origin of the raw materials, the decoration, etc.

So far, 15 enterprises have obtained the Local Commercial Sign.



5. WE DO LOCAL

We do local - Sign of Locality & Authenticity

We do local as a standardizing mark of locality and authenticity was created by the mature collaboration of the companies Topiki Paragosi and Filoxenia S.A. promotional services We do local, Cosmocert S.A. certification services, and Local Food Experts s.c.e. integrated development services, addressed to tourism businesses and:

- certifies, rewards and promotes their services, giving them an additional measurable promotional tool
- intends to highlight businesses that follow a modern and necessary business approach
- is expressed through all the actions and services they offer, operating and supporting local production and hospitality supports
- recognizes & rewards other certification standards by including them in the necessary certification criteria such as ISO, Haccp, Travelife etc.

The inspection, evaluation and potential certification of hotel units has a one-year cycle.



6. 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.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS AND NETWORKS

The Region of Crete participates with a dynamic and long-standing presence in dozens of **international exhibitions** through which partnerships, networks and new opportunities for local development are developed.

Such examples are:

- ANUGA 2023 International Fair, the world's largest food and beverage exhibition, in Cologne, Germany.
- International Alternative Tourism Fair "Caravan Salon 2023" in Düsseldorf, Germany,
- F.R.E.E. in Munich (22 - 26/02) the largest tourism, leisure and camping exhibition in Bavaria.
- IFT International Tourism Fair in Belgrade, Serbia
- International Tourism Fair "FERIE FOR ALL", in Herning, Denmark.
- International Tourism Fair IMTM in Israel.
- International Organic Food and Beverage Fair, "BIOFACH - Vivanness 2023" in Nuremberg
- International Tourism Exhibition "World Travel Market 2022" in London During the exhibition, the Greek Travel Awards were presented at a special event organised by the Greek National Tourism Organisation (EOT) and voted for by the British tourism market, of which Crete won two: the "Best Beach Destination" award and the "Best Gastronomy" award.

NETWORKING / CLUSTERING

The Region of Crete participates in national, international and European networks such as:

Arepo

The **Association of European Regions for Products of Origin** (AREPO) is a network of regions and producer associations that deals with products of origin.

AREPO aims to promote and defend the interests of producers and consumers of European regions involved in the valorization of quality food products.

Euromontana

Euromontana is the multi-sectoral association for cooperation and development of mountain areas.

Euromontana's mission is to promote living in mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.

Natura

Natura 2000 is a network of nature protection areas in the territory of the European Union. It is made up of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas designated under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, respectively. The network includes both terrestrial and Marine Protected Areas. The Natura 2000 network covered more than 18% of the European Union's land area and more than 7% of its marine area in 2022. Areas of Crete Oros Giouxtas, Asterousia Ori, Nisos Chrysi and many more.

CPMR (Conference on Peripheral Maritime Regions)

Additionally, the Region of Crete, in the context of achieving the objectives of the Regional Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy for 2020, participates in the European Social Networks, **“ELISAN”**: **“European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network”** and **“ENSA”**: **“European Network of Social Authorities”**. These are networks that pursue the objectives of social administration in a complementary and integrated way, covering both the policy-making field in all social issues and the field of social policy implementation at the level of services.

Also participates in the **ERRIN (European Regions Research and Innovation Network-www.errin.eu)**, which it also coordinates the Network's Thematic Group on Blue Growth, and presented its action and the expected results of the EUSAIR (EU Adriatic Ionian Macro-regional Strategy). The action of the Region of Crete in the ERRIN Network is of particular value for achieving this objective, due to the use of research and innovation for the priorities of Crete, which are also in line with the implementation of its Regional Strategy for Smart Specialisation.

OTHER BODIES THAT PARTICIPATE IN PARTNERSHIPS AND EUROPEAN AND WORLDWIDE NETWORKS. INDICATIVELY:

1. Heraklion Municipality

Heraklion City, the largest city of Crete participates in the Creative Cities Network of UNESCO. The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity and innovation as key drivers for a more sustainable and inclusive urban development. Heraklion was recognized as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2023.

In general, all municipalities, development companies and chambers of the island participate in international related networks and programs.

2. Educational Development Company “Ploigos”

Educational and Development Company PLOIGOS is a member of the following networks:

Iter Vitis Cultural Route of the Council of Europe

Iter Vitis association (<https://itervitis.eu/>)

The European Federation Iter Vitis is a non-profit association of indeterminate duration, which results from the International Association Iter Vitis established in 2007 in Sambuca di Sicilia (province of Agrigento, Sicily) with the aim of promoting and preserving the tangible and intangible European heritage of wine and vineculture through the realisation and management of the route “Iter Vitis – Les Chemins de la Vigne”, recognised as 25th European Cultural Route by the Council of Europe on May 15th, 2009.

International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO) (<https://isto.international/>)

The International Social Tourism Organization (est. 1963) is an international non-profit making organization whose mission is to promote access to leisure, holidays and tourism for all (i.e. young people, families, senior citizens and disabled people). It also aims at promoting sustainable and solidarity tourism to the benefit of the local population and with respect for natural and cultural heritage. The members of the ISTO are private and public organizations that are either profit-making or non-profit-making.

European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators, EAEC (<https://www.eaecnet.com>)

The European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators (EAEC), is a membership network, which currently has more than 140 members. It was founded in 2004 in Lodz, Poland, with an official kick off during the ERACON 2005 (ERASMUS Coordinators Conference and GO-Exchange Education Fair 2005) in Cyprus.

3. AKOMM PSILORITIS Development Agency of Local Government

Participates in:

- European Geoparks Network
- UNESCO World Network of Geoparks
- Transnational Cooperation entitled “Local Quality Label for Improved Goods and Services - ARGANTONIO”

4. The Universities and research centers of Crete

The Universities and research centers of Crete -University of Crete, Mediterranean University of Crete, Technical University of Crete, Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania- participate in networks designed to support scientific collaborations and in a large number of European educational programmes, which aim to strengthen inter-university cooperation, improve the quality of education, develop academic and student mobility, and cultivate European citizenship while preserving national identity and cultural self-awareness. For example have concluded more than 700 bilateral agreements with collaborating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the European Erasmus+ programme and other partners in the international environment, while they also participates in numerous education and exchange programmes.

Also, the Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH) which located in Crete and it was founded in 1983, is one of the largest research centers in Greece with well-organized facilities, highly qualified personnel and a reputation as a top-level research institution worldwide.

With:

- 567 active funded projects
- 203 EU grants
- 180 Marie Curie grants
- 41 ERC grants
- 181 Collaborating Faculty members

5. Asterousia (South Crete) in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) of the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Program (MAB).

The World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the **MAB Programme** consists of a dynamic and interactive network of sites of excellence. It fosters the harmonious integration of people and nature for sustainable development through participatory dialogue; knowledge sharing; poverty reduction and human well-being improvements; respect for cultural values and society's ability to cope with change - thus contributing to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Accordingly, the Network is one of the main international tools to develop and implement sustainable development approaches in a wide array of contexts.

DAKOS

Many still make paiximadi (rug) today, but no one makes paiximadi like the Cretans! Not without reason, the Cretan rug 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.

One of the most famous Cretan dishes is dakos, a salad made with barley rusk, tomatoes, galomizithra cheese (or 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!

*References from “Cretan Traditional Cuisine, The Miracle of Cretan Diet”,
Nikos and Maria Psyllakis, 1995*



WILD GREENS AND VEGETABLES

The Cretan diet has always been rich in greens and vegetables. The taste habits of each region determined not only the combinations of vegetables that came from the Cretan nature but also the cooking methods.

Greens raw, boiled, or fried for salad. Stamnagathi, papules, agalatsida, radish, clematis, etc. plain with olive oil, lemon and salt or combined with tomatoes, potatoes, zucchini, eggs or even legumes make up the countless Cretan salads. One of the most common cretan salad, except of the boiled greens, is the “ofti salad”. “Ofti salad” contains potatoes, onion, olives, olive oil and lemon, and sometimes build egg or/and caper.

Traditional pies with wild and non-wild greens, but also with vegetables such as onions and zucchinis, fried, grilled or grilled, small and large.

Delicious food for the table, such as “artichokes with beans”, omelette with zucchini or green chimuli, simpetherio (unrelated vegetables “simpetheriazoun”, i.e. they are related to each other in the tsoukali!), fried mushrooms, kentanes with kerevizi and tomato (leek with celery and tomato), but also the beloved dolmadakia. Dolmadakia have their roots in ancient Greece as “Thria”. That is, rolls made of vegetable leaves such as vine leaves, zucchini flowers, cabbage or gouda leaves, wrapped with vegetable and wheat filling. Later, when rice was introduced to the country, it replaced wheat in many recipes, so it is more common today and is one of the most beloved dishes of Cretans, eaten both at the everyday and at the festive table, at home, in kafeneion (local cafes), but also in restaurants.

*References from “Cretan Traditional Cuisine, The Miracle of Cretan Diet”,
Nikos and Maria Psyllakis, 1995*



PIES

The Cretan diet offers health and longevity and it has been internationally recognized as a scientifically sound dietary standard. Founded on ingredients offered by the local production, and hence its economy, such as olive oil, honey, wild and aromatic greens, wheat, agricultural and viticulture products.

With a focus on the local ingredients and cooking methods, the most widespread pies in the countryside and the urban centres of Crete are the pies cooked in a pan, like the 'hortopites' (wild greens), marathopites (fennel-based pies), cheese pies (sour, sweet or savoury with mint), 'herates mizithropites' (the dough is fried while still wet), 'sarikopites' and 'agn(i)opites' (cheese pies), 'kreatotourtes' (meat pies), the pies of Sfakia, etc. A second category is the baked pies, like 'tzoulamas' (dominated by rice), 'mizithrumpoureko' (another kind of cheese pie), and the light pies that remind one of cake, with the most popular one being the raisin pie, etc.

In the past, people made a sludgy dough by mixing water and flour. Most of today's pie preparations based on flour are variations of the oldest pie, which in its original form was baked on heated stones. Notable survivors of this pie, often called 'plakous' (loaves), are the Cretan 'plakoftes' or 'plakopites', filled with leafy aromatic greens that grow on the island. These pies are baked on hot stones by experienced housewives, and they are also found under a different name in other regions of Greece, as in most cultures that use cereals.

The Cretan eating habits is of course a synthesis of social and cultural phenomena, linked to the cycle of life, its major stations (birth, baptism, marriage, death) and events signaled by the religious calendar. In addition, the coexistence of the Cretans with various ethnicities over the centuries, and in particular the coexistence of Christianity and Islam until the first two decades of the 20th century, gradually formed a common tradition in the diet. The pita 'tzoulamas' is an example of such cultural osmosis.

References from "Culinary Cultural Heritage of Greece - The Pie", Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, Directorate of Modern Cultural Assets and Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2016



SNAILS

In the Cretan diet and cuisine, foraging plays a prominent role. The Cretans have always used what they could find in nature and cooked with the “vriskoumeno” (what they have or found). The great dietary tradition of wild greens and herbs as well as that of snails finds its roots in this practice. One of the culinary specialties of Crete! Cretans not only love snails but cook them in dozens of ways that follow the seasonality of the various species. In the spring the combinations with vegetables such as fennel, broad beans and wild greens, in the summer with zucchini, with okra, with aubergines, with wheat and tomato, or Boubouristoi!

In Crete there are more than 100 recipes for cooking snails. “Boubouristoi” snails is one of the most beloved by the locals and “Charakianoï” snails is one of the rarest.

“BOUBOURISTOI” SNAILS

Snails cooked “boubourista” (face down) in the pan, with rosemary, vinegar & extra virgin olive oil.

“CHARAKIANOI” SNAILS

The snails are cooked just with sea salt between two flat stones (“charakia”) in the fire of the woods.

Also Cretans cook them with groats, zucchini & potatoes, black-eyed peas, stew, with dried okra or fill zucchini flowers with the flesh of snails and many other recipes, depending on the imagination of the cook. Snails are an ideal snack during periods of fasting and especially on Good Friday when we cook them with vinegar.



OFTO

In Crete, meat from small animals is still consumed today. Traditionally Cretans rarely ate beef or cow meat. Pork a little more often. The favorite meat is even today that of goats and sheep which are raised on the island and are free grazing. This meat, however, is almost always cooked with greens, vegetables, legumes. These combinations are impressive and give amazing flavors. Modern research proves that even in Minoan times the Cretans cooked meat with vegetables and legumes. Among the most beloved recipes are the lamb with ascolymbrus (wild greens), meat (lamb, goat or pork) with fresh braised beans, meat with chickpeas, lamb with artichokes.

Also an important place in the Cretan cuisine and in the hearts of the Cretans is “ofto” meat. That is, meat grilled on coals. The shepherds of Psiloritis do not wait for coals to cook their oftto, 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 oftto. 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 oftus.

- 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!

*References from “Cretan Traditional Cuisine, The Miracle of Cretan Diet”,
Nikos and Maria Psyllakis, 1995*



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.



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 “prosphora” 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.

ARTS, CRAFTS & GASTRONOMY

07

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. The cultural element "Leaping Dance of Sitia" has been included in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.

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 of all the other Greek regions and presents a unique continuous tradition and progressive stability within the last 4 millennia. The Cretan ceramists generally did not accept foreign influences in their basic patterns and the Cretan ceramics of prehistoric and historical antiquity, of the first and second Byzantine periods, are formed with an absolute equality and harmony, in relation to the paternal heritage. In recent years, four large pottery centres operated, one in each geographical division of the island, which supported the needs of agricultural households: in Nochia, Margarites, Thrapsanos, Kentri, from west to east. At the same time, individual workshops operated in various parts of the island, such as in Karoti Rethymnon, Agios Pantes, Asfentyle, Vraskas, Exopoli and Kampanos Chania. The production of these individual workshops was often enhanced by the presence of seasonal Thrapsani or Margaritsana workshops established in their area. Today, ceramic art continues in Crete mainly concentrated in two of its four pottery centers that are still preserved, in Thrapsanos and Margarites. The cultural elements "The pottery tradition of Thrapsano (Heraklion, Crete)" and the "Pottery of the Margarites. (Mylopotamos of Rethymnon, Crete)" are in the integration process in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.

USE OF CERAMICS IN CRETE:

Ceramic production covered the entire spectrum of the agricultural, domestic and religious life of the inhabitants of Crete. Although the use of various types was not absolutely defined, special vessels were made, the shape of which was absolutely connected to the use:



- For the storage of agricultural products (ladopithara [olive oil pithos], krasopithara [wine pithos], rubakia, kourupia, and melokourupa [honey vessels]).
- Water was carried from the spring and kept cool in pitchers, while passers-by carried flasks similar to the Minoans, so that they always had water, wine or raki.
- The shepherds carried the milk in special vessels, the galetia. Special utensils were used for milking, feeding and watering the animals. Other utensils served the agricultural economy.
- Other utensils were used for food preparation such as Lekanidi (small basin) and pestles or in cooking, such as tsikalia, juvetzia and kalitsounoplakies.
- On the table were jugs, baskets, earthenware plates and mugs.
- A series of vessels were intended also for religious use as Kolymbithra or fraski (font).
- Measuring vessels.
- Architectural elements.
- Games

WEAVING

The art of weaving has a continuous presence on the island of Crete. Weaving was the second product exported by Crete from the time of the Minoans, following olive oil. The Cretans honour this ancient civilization as few regions in Greece do, always striving to pass it on to the next generations. In each region, there is a distinct cultural heritage shaped by historical development, social organization, interaction with the natural environment, population movements, foreign influences, intermarriages, clothing variations, and the formation of interior spaces in homes, as well as magical-religious practices and beliefs, etc. The cultural element “The weaving art and its preservation in Asterousia, Crete” has been included in the Greek National Intangible Cultural Heritage Index.

Weaving, along with everything surrounding it—especially the community and its livelihood needs and the material objects that cover them—expresses the indigenous cultural past and is an invaluable legacy of the folk tradition with timeless value. Weaving can be seen from the perspective of meeting material needs but also as an expression of the creativity of the weavers. Whether consciously or not, always in interaction with the natural and social environment, they write their own story with coloured threads, as each woven piece reflects not only a passive reproduction of favourite designs but also thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Woven fabrics are crafted from sheep wool, cotton, linen, and silk, so they are related to agri-food but also the circular economy, and they were covering many basic cretans’ everyday life needs. They also feature rich decoration (woven, embroidered, or knitted) and themes (symbolic, geometric designs, nature-inspired patterns), countless colour combinations, and aesthetic, and technical variations.

- “Bagkali” saddlecloth, a narrow and long white fabric embroidered at both ends that covered the saddle of the horse.
- “Vourgia” or traveller’s and shepherd’s sack.
- Large sack for the farmer.
- Women’s and Men’s work aprons.
- “Anthomantela,” cheese-making cloth for draining cheese.
- Wedding sack, a large sack, woollen or cotton, decorated with colourful wide stripes. The bride used it to transport her woven dowry to the marital home. Later, it was mainly used for the monthly transport of wheat barley and then flour to and from the grinding mill for bread and rusks preparation.



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, while the drink there was mainly local brandy. After 1970, when raki was established as a drink, 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 and has almost disappeared nowadays. 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 to the few but very good "magerika" on the island.

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.



GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN CRETE

Culinary tourism in Crete is developing very dynamically and is a unique proposal for exploring the rich culinary and cultural mosaic of the island. Several initiatives and organizations have played a pivotal role in enhancing the gastronomy tourism experience, showcasing the unique blend of culture and cuisine that defines Crete. Initiatives like “AGROXENIA”, under Hellas Agritourism, stand out in promoting sustainable agritourism experiences in Crete. This initiative connects visitors with local farmers, allowing them to engage directly with agricultural practices, taste fresh produce, and experience the rural lifestyle. “Wines of Crete” unites the winemakers of Crete to promote the rich viticulture tradition of the island, the local varieties, the customs of winemaking, and the local wines and wineries through multiple actions such as wine tours and participation in international exhibitions. The Agronutritional Cooperation of the Region of Crete strategically supports the agro-nutritional sector, linking it directly to tourism and catering establishments by organising events and managing national and European programs, and projects for Cretan products. “We Do Local” is a comprehensive philosophy guiding companies to promote local customs, traditions, and cuisine while supporting regional producers, respecting the environment, and fostering sustainability. This certification standard, a collaboration of Local Production and Hospitality SA, Cosmocert SA, and Local Food Experts sce, recognizes businesses adopting a modern, essential approach. In addition, individual noteworthy initiatives, actions and practices are independently developed by the large hotel units of Crete, regarding the documentation, adoption and promotion of the Cretan diet and cuisine. Noteworthy is also the development of initiatives and practices from numerous smaller businesses that contribute to gastronomy tourism by offering experiences such as cooking classes, tastings, culinary tours etc. Their dedication plays a vital role in preserving and disseminating the essence of Cretan gastronomy, creating an interconnected ecosystem that benefits both local communities and visitors seeking an authentic experience of Cretan gastronomy.

RESEARCH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

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. 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. There are also schools that implement programs on the Cretan diet periodically so that education on a healthier lifestyle can start early. Also, related educational programmes are developed from the Region of Crete, the Municipalities and the Museums of the island.



AMBASSADORS & SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

AMBASSADORS



Giannis Apostolakis

Executive Chef of the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAICH) & President of the Board / Head of the Cretan Gastronomy Network



Konstantinos Chartzoulakis

Agriculturist
Senior Researcher at NAGREF-
Institute for Olive Tree & Subtropical
Plants & Former Director at NAGREF-
Institute for Olive Tree & Subtropical
Plants



Nikos Frantzeskakis

President of the Board of Agrozenia
Association - Hellas Agrotourism and
Multifunctional Farms.



Sevasti Krasanaki

President of the Women's Association
of Episkopi "Ergani"



Panagiotis Magganas

Owner of Peskesi Restaurant and
Peskesi Organic Farm
Authentic Cretan Cuisine
Farm to table
Sustainable



Dr Alexandros Stefanakis

Veterinarian & Scientific - technical
support of companies & institutions
of the agri-food sector and Research
Associate in University Institutions in
Animal Production, Quality, Hygiene
and Food Safety.



Stelios Trilirakis

Livestock farmer; organic farmer;
graduate of tourism profession;
founder of the slow food experience
in Crete; member of the Agrozenia
association in Greece; member of the
Open Farm network; member of the
Cretan gastronomy network; owner
of the traditional Cretan gastronomy
center "Ntounias" (agricultural farm
and tavern)



Anastasios Papadakis

Executive Chef &
President of Chef's
Club of Crete



**Archimandrite
Amvrosios Skarvelis**

Abbot of the
Monastery of Toplou
- Sitia



Petros Marinakis

Entrepreneur
Founder & Director of
the Botanical Garden
of Crete



Nikos Miliarakis

Winemaker &
President of the Board
of the Wines of Crete
cluster/network

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE



Antonis Kafatos

Emeritus Professor of Preventive Medicine and Nutrition, School of Medicine, University of Crete



Dr. Georgios Apladas

Lecturer of the Department of Business Administration & Tourism Hellenic Mediterranean University Heraklion, Crete



George Arampatzis

Associate Professor in the School of Production Engineering and Management of the Technical University of Crete.



George Baourakis

Director - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania CIHEAM MAICH



Matthaios Frantzeskakis

President of the Cultural Organization of Crete & Director of the Chania Film Festival & Coordinator of the actions: «Cretan Diet Routes», «Villages with lights on», «The oral history of Crete»



Constantine Manasakis

Economist, Associate Professor, University of Crete



Stergios Pirintsos

Professor of Systematic Botany & Plant Ecology, Department of Biology at University of Crete.
Professor with scientific responsibility for the Botanical Garden of the University of Crete.



Vassilios Raikos

Associate Professor
Hellenic Mediterranean University (HMU)
Department of Nutrition and Dietetics Sciences
Tripitos 72300 Sitia



John Vontas

Director of the Institute Molecular Biology and Biotechnology, Foundation for Research and Technology (IMBB/FORTH) and Professor Agricultural University of Athens



Katerina Moniaki

Archaeologist-
Archaeobotanist



Giorgos Nikolakakis

Associate Professor of
Social Anthropology,
University of Crete



George Papamichail

Director of the Science
& Technology Park of
Crete (STEP-C)



Aris Tsantiropoulos

Associate Professor of
Social Anthropology,
University of Crete,
Department of
Sociology.

SIGNATORY STAKEHOLDERS TO THE CANDIDACY OF CRETE FOR EUROPEAN REGION OF GASTRONOMY



Educational Development Company PLOIGOS



AGRONUTRITIONAL
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REGION OF CRETE

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



ΕΝΩΣΗ
ΞΕΝΟΔΟΧΕΙΩΝ
ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΥ

Heraklio Hoteliers Association



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



Cretan Women in Business Association

The future of Cretan gastronomy is based on a delicate balance between tradition and innovation. Time-honoured Cretan dishes and local practices endure, yet the region's commitment is to ensure it's sustainability. 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. 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 prosperity of the region. Several key aspects have been considered by local association, institutions and independent initiatives:

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

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, UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy

2. Cretan street cooking food

Agios Nikolaos

3. Olive oil festival

Achladia, Sitia

4. Xigalo Feast

Chamezi, Sitia

5. Cretan nutrition fest

Rethimno

6. Land of Mylopotamos

Perama village, Mylopotamos

7. Rural August

Chania

8. Amari Green Festival

Amari area villages

9. Earth festival - people and products

Chania

10. Kissamos culture festival

Kissamos beach

11. Cretan Food Culture

The institution is implemented every year in a different area of the Cretan countryside.

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 festival - Chania

Custom of Klidonas, Armeni Sitias

Choclios festival, Paraspori Sitias

Corn festival, Piscokefalo Sitias

Myzithropita festival, Palekastro Sitias

Traditional "kazanemata", Chamezi Sitias

Kommatas festival, Exo Moulina Sitias

Feast of figs, Sikia Sitias

BUDGET AND ACTION PLAN

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

4.2.1 Campaign to promote the use of local products in HORECA.

- 4.2.2 Corners in supermarkets.
- 4.2.3 CERG labelling on some symbolic products.

4.3 Touristic

- 4.3.1 Targeted summer promotions in tourist flow transit areas/agreement with a rent-a-car company.
- 4.3.2 Possibility of being present with informational material or a CERG corner at all sector fairs.
- 4.3.3 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

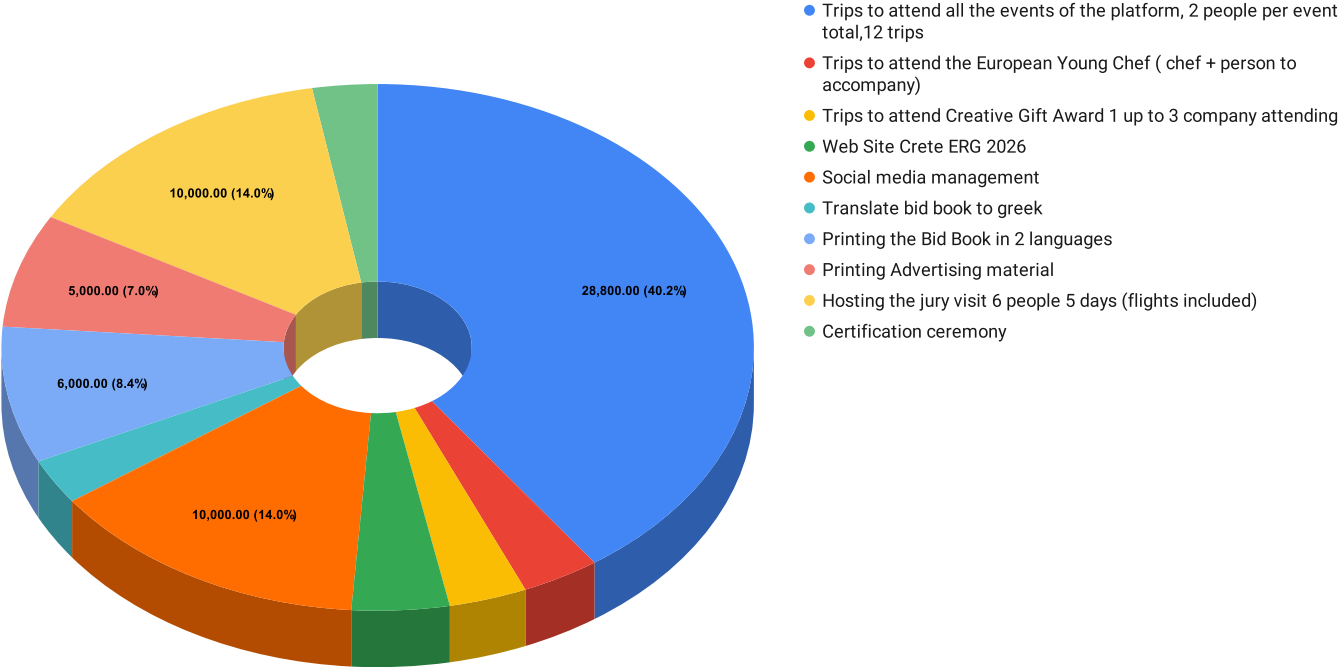
5.1 Creation of an online calendar with an integrated map of Crete that becomes a symbol of the project and the values of democracy and sharing: each group member can enter events and activities and geoposition them (they will be visible online after approval by the site moderator). Events will be for 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

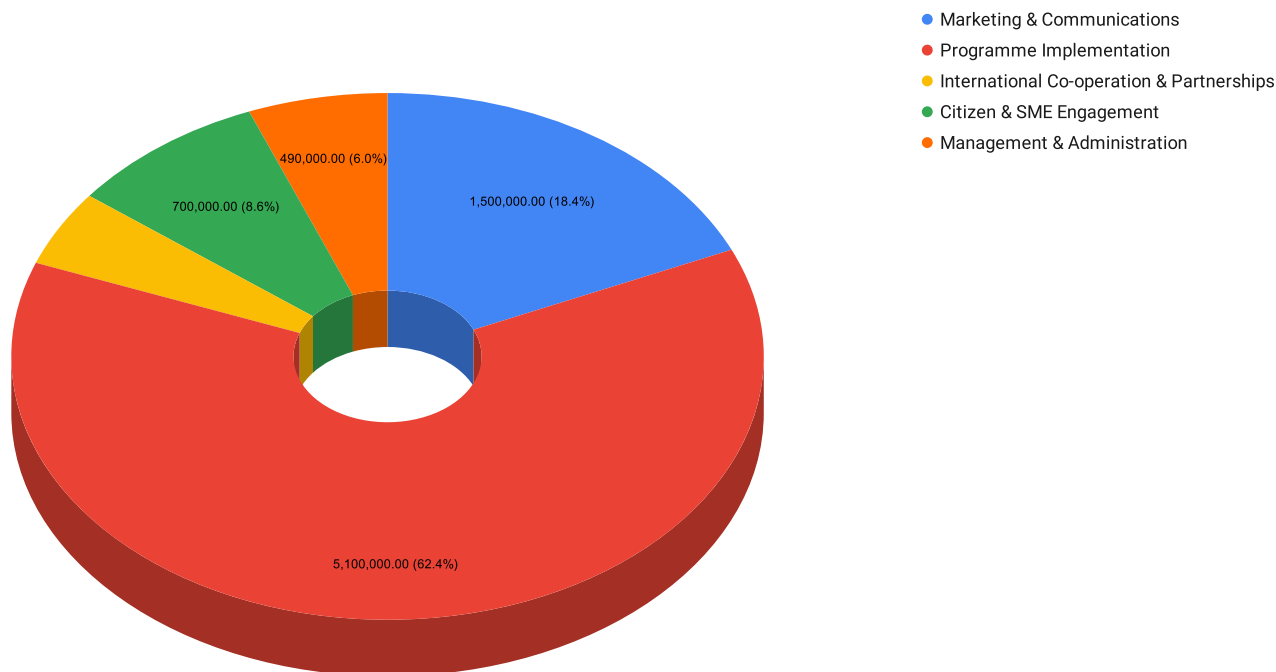
LOCAL EDITION OF CREATIVE GIFT AWARD

PLATFORM MEETING

Budget 2024-2025 € 71,600.00



Budget 2026 € 8,170,000.00



The 2026 budget is mainly based on events, actions of research, documentation, education, promotion and development of Cretan Nutrition and Cuisine that are already implemented and will continue to be implemented at least until 2026, but also new related initiatives that will be developed exclusively within the framework of the title of European Gastronomy Region.

NOTE

NOTE
