

12 Greek Traditional types of Food

1.MOUSAKAS



Mousakas is an eggplant- aubergine and potato-based dish, including ground meat, with many local and regional variations. The most famous version of the dish today appeared in the 1920s with the publishing of Nikolaos Tselementes' culinary book in Greece. Many versions have a top layer made of milk-based sauce thickened with egg (custard) or flour (béchamel sauce). The dish is layered and typically served hot.

2.FASOLADA



Fasolada is a Greek and Cypriot soup of dry white beans, olive oil, and vegetables, sometimes called the "national food of the Greeks. Fasolada is made by simmering beans with tomatoes and other vegetables such as carrots, onion, parsley, celery, and bay leaf. Lima beans are sometimes used instead of white beans. Recipes vary considerably, often including meat. It is often enriched with olive oil either while cooking it or on the table. Fasolada is highly nutritious and filling. Beans are rich in fiber, which when combined with water or liquid make you feel full for longer. Also high in protein, iron and vitamin B, fasolada soup is perfect for that winter flu! Olive oil, which is one of the vital ingredients of the traditional Greek bean soup, is one of the primary foods associated with the heart-healthy Mediterranean diet and many books have been written about its health benefits. Olive oil, when consumed raw, gets to keep all its precious vitamins, so when preparing this Greek bean soup, add the olive oil towards the end of cooking time. This will also help the soup to become thicker and creamier. Make sure you use extra virgin olive oil, which will surely lift the flavour.

3.TSOUREKI



Tsoureki is a sweet holiday bread made with flour, milk, butter and sugar and commonly seasoned with orange zest, mastic resin or mahlab. Tsoureki (Easter bread) is made by Greek communities during Easter, not only in Greece, but also in other countries with Greek communities. Tsoureki dough is all about the rising, which means that the right temperature is the key. Once starting to prepare the tsoureki, make sure that all ingredients are at room temperature before using and lukewarm when added in the mixture; this will guarantee that your dough will rise. Give the dough time to rise and it will reward you with its distinctive airy fluffiness. The most common mistake for the ones that haven't tried a tsoureki recipe before is that once the dough is mixed, it resembles a little sticky, so most just add more flour, which results in Greek Easter bread losing its fluffiness.

The ingredients are:

- 35g butter, from cow's milk, at room temperature
- 135g milk, at room temperature
- 200g sugar
- 4 medium eggs, at room temperature
- 870g bread flour
- 21g dry yeast
- 100g lukewarm water
- zest of 1 orange
- 3g ground mastic
- 4g ground mahleb
- 1 egg and 1 tbsp water, for glazing the tsoureki
- almond silvers for garnish

4.ARNI STIN SOUVLA



It is the ultimate traditional Easter food, no matter how shocking it can be for the non-Greeks. The whole lamb is put through the spit and is roasted on fire for about 4 hours, depending on its size/weight. Salt, pepper, garlic, laurel or other spices are put inside the lamb and then the stomach is sewed, so that all herbs and spice will boil and give the meat the desired taste. Easter Sunday is the most important celebration for the Greeks and it is a day of joy, laughter and good time. On that day big cities and towns are empty, as all Greeks go to the villages, where families gather at a relative's house, usually the one who has a big garden or yard. Of course, that day is a day when family arguments prevail, arguments about when the lamb is ready, or how strong the fire should be...

5. PIES



Pies hold a special place in this Mediterranean cuisine, as it is among the oldest, simplest and yet most delicious dishes one can find in the country. "Pites" as they are known in Greek, have so many variations, that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that there's not even a way to count precisely how many different kinds of Greek pies there are out there. Nonetheless, regardless of their filling or their different types of crusts, Greek pies share some basic common characteristics: They are made of the simplest possible ingredients and they can feed a lot of people, and, when we say a lot, we mean...scores! This is the reason why pies were able to keep much of the Greek population alive during the tough years of World War II, and every other time the country had to face harsh conditions for whatever reason. Almost every Greek household, even back into antiquity, had some flour, a little bit of olive oil, some milk or cheese, and herbs. But these basic ingredients can make one of the most delicious Greek pies one can ever find: the much-loved "tiropita". "Tiropita", which literally means cheese pie, could be described as the most basic form of pie, from which all other variations would emerge. Flour makes the

“phyllo” pastry (a thin sheet of dough), milk makes the feta cheese and herbs from the backyard of the house or the nearby mountains would add the much-needed flavor to this delicious dish. From the moment a cook is finished laying out his or her phyllo, all the later fillings are simply a matter of imagination. Spinach, leeks, tomatoes, leafy greens, pumpkin, peppers, chicken, lamb, pork, cream, mushrooms, pasta, turkey, mince, beans — and the list can go on, and on, and on. Of course, the kind of pie you’ll find in a specific region of Greece is determined by its traditions, its geomorphology, its climate, and its history. For example, Northern parts of the Greek mainland are known for their thick, hearty pies with a great deal of meat and fat, since their winters are long and harsh, and these pies would offer people some much-needed calories. Kreatopita, traditionally made with minced pork and leeks in Macedonia, is a great example of this tradition. A similar example would be the famous “bougatsa,” another Northern Greek delicacy, made traditionally with thick custard, cinnamon and “bougatsa” pastry, which is a more tender, yet still crispy, variation of phyllo pastry. On the other hand, the southern regions of the country and its many islands have tons of traditional pies that are a bit lighter, with less animal fat and more olive oil, vegetables and fine cheeses. A mouth-watering example of this would be the “strifti” from Skopelos. While it is by no means a “light” dish, strifti is traditionally made from goats milk cheese or feta cheese, and a swirly, super-crunchy phyllo pastry, full of aromas from the island’s herbs. Lighter variations of strifti include pies made with mizithra cheese, which is a softer and lighter version of the Greek-style cheese or simply made with greens and vegetables, without any animal fat or meat; this is most ideal for vegetarians. Of course, sweet pies are a must when one tries Greek desserts — as of course, one must. The traditionally sweet Greek pie made with pumpkin is a common, hearty dish eaten between October and the end of winter. Other sweet pies are made with custard, milk or even cheese, which all have a lovely taste even when cooked as a sweet, such as the mizithra pie mentioned above. The list of examples of pie variations from Greece could literally be endless. Each region of Greece is justifiably proud of its own “pita,” so why don’t you go out there and discover it on your own? Now, if you’re away from Greece, there’s still no need to despair. You don’t have to wait until your next trip to Greece! Be creative and feel free to use all these different ingredients from all over the country to make your own special Greek delicacy, which could be the best way to help you remember the taste of Greece. Pies were invented for an additional reason. Because they are easy to carry! Up in the mountains, where shepherds had to move their animals to graze, pies were always in their bags. They would stay away from home from dawn till dusk, so they had something filling with them.

6.SOUVLAKI



Greece is well known for its delicious cuisine and healthy Mediterranean diet, but what about its fast food? Everyone who has visited the country has tasted at least once the famous "souvlaki" or "souvlaki with pita" or "pita gyros," three dishes combining meat in a very tasteful dish that has become a trademark of the modern Greek culture over the years along with other products such as the frappe, ouzo, retsina and feta cheese. Whether to take away, eat it out on the curb or just sit in the shop and enjoy it at your leisure, souvlaki and pita gyros have become the most popular, convenient, and cost-effective food option someone can come across in Greece. The word *souvlaki* is a diminutive of the Greek *souvla* (spit), itself borrowed from the Latin word *subula*. But the origins of souvlaki date back to ancient Greece. It was known with the name *obeliskos* (dim. of *obelos*–spit), mentioned by among others in the works of Aristophanes, Xenophon, Aristotle etc. A meat and bread recipe which resembles the way pita souvlaki is served today with pita bread was also attested by Athenaeus in his "Deipnosophistae" and called the plate *kandaulos*. The skewered kebab-like recipe existed as a favourite in ancient Greece during Archaic times, as the earliest references are attested in Homer. However, excavations held in Akrotiri on the Greek island of Santorini by professor Christos G. Doumas, unearthed stone sets of barbecues for skewers used before the 17th century BC. Even later on, during the Byzantine era, references survive describing street vendors selling souvlakia with pita in Constantinople. The first souvlaki shops in Greece appeared in Livadia in 1951, selling souvlakia on a stick and rotating gyros. It may be served on the skewer for eating out of hand, in a pita sandwich with garnishes and sauces, or on a dinner plate, often with fried potatoes.

7.CHORIATIKI SALATA



Greek salad or choriatiiki salad is a salad in Greek cuisine. Greek salad is made with pieces of tomatoes, sliced cucumbers, onion, feta cheese, and olives, typically seasoned with salt and Greek mountain oregano, and dressed with olive oil. Common additions include green bell pepper slices or caper berries. It is the most popular salad especially in summer, when tomatoes are grown outside the greenhouses and their aroma and taste are unique. It is light and keeps you cool, especially during the summer months, when heat makes you want to eat something light and refreshing!

Ingredients

- 1.4 Fresh Tomatoes (sliced)
- 2.1 Onion (sliced)
- 3.1 Cucumber (diced into cubes)
- 4.1/2 cup Feta Cheese (cubed)
5. Greek Olives
6. Capers (optional)
7. Olive Oil
8. Oregano
9. Salt

8.KEFTEDAKIA



Keftedes: A classic Greek dish full of memories and flavor and the absolute Greek comfort food. Keftedes or else Keftedakia (smaller Keftedes) are the Greek meatballs. The word is probably derived from the Persian "kofta" which may also be related to the Byzantine Greek "kopto" (diced). Whatever the origin may be, when we mention we're making keftedes, smiles and happy faces appear around us. When you make keftedes, your house is filled with the aroma of the herbs and you get really impatient to try them. It's better if you serve them slightly warm or in room temperature though, in order to really appreciate the flavors. These meatballs are usually served as an appetizer ("meze") with wine, beer or ouzo. They're also a great snack as you can put them in sandwiches, you can serve them in family gatherings, parties, buffets...the possibilities are endless. You can also serve them as a main dish with French fries or roasted potatoes and salad on the side. The combination with the traditional Greek salad is amazing! And wait until you try them with tzatziki; you won't believe how awesome this combo is! Actually, any yogurt sauce will do, but if you do make some tzatziki you won't regret the extra effort. And the best part is, if there are any leftovers, you can throw them in a simple tomato, onion and garlic marinara and let them simmer for a few minutes. Serve this "new dish" over pasta. When the '80s Greeks were growing up, keftedakia was a summer staple. Any picnic was starting with a Tupperware full of keftedakia. They were also consumed on the beach, after swimming as a snack. Nowadays this seems a bit old school, "uncool" but you may still run into Greeks carrying "keftedakia" in a bowl!

9.LADERA



Ladera is a classic Greek dish that grew out of simple peasant-style cooking. Ladera are made with seasonal vegetables. For example in the winter a typical dish is cauliflower, in the summer green beans and okra are very common. But ladera are perfect for the summer, especially as the warm weather has us craving vegetables rather than meat. The Greek word for oil is "ladi" and these dishes are oil-based, thus the name which translates loosely to "with oil" or "oily." It goes without saying in Greece that oil refers to olive oil. Ladera dishes are almost always vegetarian, made up of one or more vegetables cooked in an olive oil-based sauce that often includes tomatoes, garlic, herbs, and spices. The earliest versions of ladera were tomato-less because tomatoes were not introduced in Greece until the 17th century and they did not really catch on until the 19th century. Nonetheless, these dishes are a staple of the cuisine in modern times. These dishes are favorites any day of the week but are especially appreciated during Lent and other times of fasting when meat and dairy products are restricted in the Greek Orthodox tradition.

Experts recommend consuming between five and nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day. That is a lot, particularly if you shudder at the sight of a heaping mound of plain old vegetables on your dinner plate. Greek ladera recipes simplify that dietary requirement and make it much more palatable. Depending on the exact recipe, many ladera dishes meet the daily requirement for vegetables on their own, and often without a lot of excess carbohydrates. You will probably come close to meeting your daily fiber requirements with one of these dishes as well. As for the olive oil, it is a prime source of antioxidants. You will get all these health benefits from relatively minimal calories.

10.KOULOURI THESSALONIKIS



In Greece, it's not uncommon to see busy workers running to their workplace with a *koulouri* (a sesame bread crown) and a cup of frappe in hand. This street food-cum-breakfast is part of the Greek ritual for eating on the go, and it can be bought plain or stuffed with Feta cheese. Here is a brief history of the *koulouri*, Greece's ultimate breakfast on the go.

Some historians trace *koulouri's* origins back to antiquity – taken from the ancient *kollyra*, a type of round bread served to the slaves – and to the origin of street food. For thousands of years, street food was a way of providing the population with cheap food options. For example, during the Byzantine Empire, it is said that the streets of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) were filled with street food vendors selling a variety of items to locals and travelers. One food still common today in Greece and Turkey is the *koulouri* (or *simit* in Turkish), a ring of bread sprinkled with sesame seeds. And though Thessaloniki seems to be credited as its birthplace, it can now be found throughout the country, enjoyed by people of all ages as a snack or a quick breakfast. Available in many variations (multigrain, filled with chocolate spread, cheese or tahini or even without sesame seeds), the traditional sesame-seed *koulouri* was first introduced by Greek refugees from Asia Minor who were flooding Greece's second city. *Koulouria* (plural of *koulouri*) were sold early in the morning by street vendors – who had baskets (*tavades*) precariously resting on their heads – located in highly frequented areas. This healthy snack, packed with carbohydrates and proteins, is virtually sold everywhere, in bakeries or on the streets. And while it's usually in a simple ring form, you may also find it twisted or braided. And do not mistake them for bagels – *koulouria* are not boiled and typically have a crunch when you bite into them. If you want to taste one, it is best enjoyed fresh (buy it only in the morning) as

it quickly turns hard after a few hours of exposure to the air. Fair warning, though: you may soon become addicted!

11.BAKALIAROS SKORDALIA



The Annunciation (or *Evangelismos* in Greek) to the Theotokos is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on March 25th. Greeks also celebrate Greek Independence Day this day. The 25th of

March is always in the period of the Great Lent when the Orthodox fast for nearly fifty days. No meat, no fish, no dairy products and sometimes no olive oil are allowed to be consumed. The Church made two exceptions: one is on the 25th of March and the other on Palm Sunday when only fish can be consumed. According to the Gospel of Luke, the Archangel Gabriel appeared to Panagia (Virgin Mary) to announce to her that she would conceive Jesus Christ. The country marks the double holiday with two things: Parades and Bakaliaros (Codfish) and Skordalia (potato and garlic mash). A custom across the country on this day is to eat Bakaliaros with skordalia, as it is a joyous occasion, allowing the fast to be broken today. For people living near the shores they ate fresh fish on both these occasions but people in remote, mountain villages could not, as there were no refrigeration trucks to transport fish. So when salted Vakalaos or Bakaliaros (Cod) was imported, lots of years ago, it was ideal, not only for lent but for other days as well, as it was cheap and could be preserved for a long time.

Try Bakaliaros coated with beer batter and then fried and you will have the most crispy and delicious cod ever that you won't be able to resist devouring more and more bites!

12.TZATZIKI



Tzatziki, the popular Greek yogurt garlic dip is a favorite at Greek tavernas and restaurants. Creamy, spicy with cool cucumber and garlic, this dip is delicious and addictive! Greeks usually eat tzatziki with bread, it is also used for the famous souvlaki wrapped in a pita and of course in gyros. Almost all Greeks love dipping bread and Greek fries in tzatziki that is served at every traditional restaurant. Tzatziki is also the ideal accompaniment with fried (or baked) zucchini chips and any kind of patty or fritter, especially vegetable patties. While many people associate tzatziki with the unhealthy gyro sandwich or souvlaki, it is actually very healthy and an antioxidant powerhouse. The garlic and olive oil are great sources of antioxidants and the yogurt is a good source of protein, calcium and has some of that friendly bacteria for your belly. Traditionally, tzatziki is served as a dip along with bread for dipping. It is of course an important ingredient in souvlaki and gyros and it is fine to dip any kind of meat in it as well. It makes a great dip for carrot sticks, celery sticks, raw zucchini strips, cucumber and cherry tomatoes.

Ingredients

- 8 ounces full fat Greek yogurt
- 2 garlic cloves
- Salt
- 1-2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium cucumber
- Fresh dill

Instructions

1. Crush the garlic with a little bit of salt and pepper.
2. Peel the cucumber and grate. Squeeze well to get rid of water.
3. Whip the yogurt in a bowl and then add the garlic paste, mixing well and then add the cucumber and mix again.
4. Start adding small amounts of olive oil alternating with the vinegar while mixing.
5. Add about 2 teaspoons fresh dill and mix well.
6. Let it sit at least an hour in the refrigerator before serving.