

masterchef australia



meet the cooks

Geni PAPACOSTAS

Status : Top 20

Age: 54

State: Queensland

Occupation: Teaching assistant

Favourite cuisine: Mediterranean, and a little Asian fusion

Favourite place to travel: Europe - partying in Rhodes, chilling out in Crete

Favourite dish to cook: Spinach/lamb giouvetsi smothered in feta

Favourite dessert to eat: Lightest galaktoboureko

Sweet or Savoury: Savoury

Chilli or garlic: You can't have one without the other

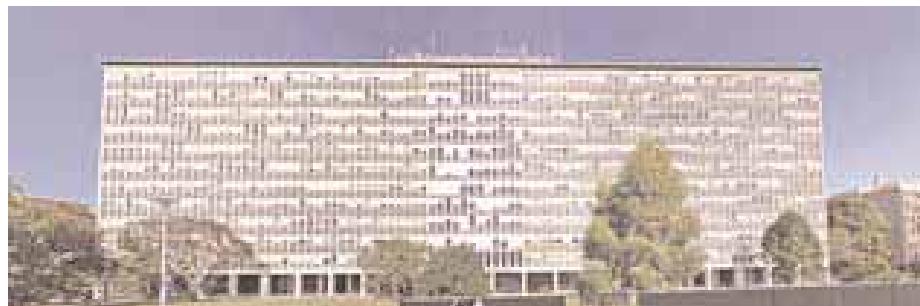
Forget kitchen utensils - the one item Geni can't live without is her hot rollers! "They travel with me everywhere", admits MasterChef's oldest contestant.

Monash Uni hurdle for Greek study in Sydney

The effort to revive a Greek studies program at Monash University has sparked controversy at the embryonic stage. As reported in Neos Kosmos English Edition (NKEE) on March 2, after a suspension of almost 10 years, the University is examining the prospect of re-establishing a Greek Studies program.

This was made possible through a campaign by the Monash Hellenic Student Society that joined forces with Monash University Classics Lecturer, Dr Eva Anagnostou Laoutidou. The controversy is based on the fact that the person who was appointed from the Greek Education Ministry to teach in this program does not possess the required qualifications.

More specifically, the opening of the position was only advertised in Greek newspapers and not here in Australia. One of the key requirements set out in this announcement was that the successful candidate would need to be at least a teacher of



Modern Greek at secondary level. Yet the person who was actually appointed is only a primary education teacher.

This has raised eyebrows in Australia amongst the Greek education fraternity, with two Greek educators having already filed an official objection with the Greek Ministry of Education to this appointment.

NKEE contacted Dr Laoutidou who explained that this appointment is only temporary for one year. Yet she highlighted the fact that this person is trying to extend his appointment. Dr Laoutidou however did not believe that there was a problem with the qualifications of the appointee.

An additional hurdle faced by Dr Laoutidou's efforts to revive the Greek program in Monash University is the low turnout of students for the Greek Access program

that is available as of this academic semester. Short courses in Greek for beginners and intermediary levels are being offered twice a week, every Tuesday and Thursday. So far only nine students, combined, are taking part in this program.

When asked if she was pleased with those numbers Dr Laoutidou declined to comment directly only saying that it is "a new initiative that needs more time and support within the Greek community."

Sources from the Greek Ministry of Education revealed to NKEE that they are following closely the developments at Monash University. The Ministry of Education is covering most of the cost for the potential establishment of the Greek Studies program at Monash University (in appointing the person who will be teaching the Modern Greek courses).

War erupts over the teachings of cheeses

UBIQUITOUS in salads, cubed into casseroles or simply fried into golden slabs of rubbery deliciousness, haloumi cheese, the sun-dried tomato equivalent of the early 2000s, seems an unlikely subject for international intrigue.

In the past few years, however, this apparently innocuous dairy product has become a diplomatic football as the ongoing cold war between Turkey and Cyprus enters its trickiest phase: the registration of EU food products.

Created nine years after the 1974 Turkish invasion, the so-called Turkish Republic of North Cyprus, or TRNC, is part of the last divided country in Europe and a persistent thorn in the side of Turkey's tortuous EU negotiations. Although the Mediterranean island is today divided by the Green Line, ethnic Greeks to the south and Turks in the north share many cultural facets to which both claim equal rights. Nothing illustrates this battle so well as the bickering over the island's indigenous cuisine.

Called hellim in Turkish, the precise geographic origins of haloumi are a mystery. It is, however, widely recognised as a Cypriot specialty and, for the past few years, the legitimate government of Cyprus has been drafting proposals to have haloumi registered with the EU as a protected designation of origin product. That would mean no one, including Turkey or the TRNC, would be able to produce or sell haloumi under that name anywhere in Europe.

A popular symbol of the EU's perceived bureaucratic pettiness, PDO registrations have inspired numerous nationalist tugs-of-war over a favoured salami or the occasional "scutched flax" product. Few, however, have had the political implications of haloumi. Haloumi v hellim stories have become a regular

feature in the press on both sides of the border, and the continuing sale by the Turks of haloumi and hellim in Europe and the Middle East is a source of outrage to Greek Cypriots who regard the Turkish product as a cheap imitation and a form of cultural theft.

Dismissive of these objections, Turkish Cypriots maintain they have a cultural right to make a product they regard as their shared heritage without having to seek approval from a hostile Cypriot bureaucracy. Apart from anything else, the TRNC economy is hamstrung by trade regulations and haloumi is one of its few viable industries.

The issue is further complicated by the question of which milk haloumi ought to be made from. Drafts of the Cypriot PDO application for haloumi have specified certain percentages of goat's and sheep milk, but haloumi made with cow's milk is common in both Turkey and Cyprus (and, indeed, Australia, where it is made by several manufacturers). In this matter, Turkish haloumi producers have found unlikely allies in Cypriot dairy farmers; worried by a loss of income, they have produced medieval texts describing the use of cow's milk in the manufacture of



haloumi as evidence for their legitimacy.

Haloumi is not the only foodstuff to find itself (ahem) sandwiched by the ethnic rivalry: when an EU pamphlet listed baklava as a Greek Cypriot dessert, bakers protested on the streets of Istanbul. And Turkish coffee is now known as Greek or Cypriot coffee south of the border.

Perhaps the most outrageous example of culinary bickering, however, was what might be referred to as the Turkish Delight Incident. Called lokum in Turkish and loukoumi in Greek, the sticky, rose-scented cubes were made by the Ottomans for hundreds of years until they were popularised as Turkish delight by a canny 19th-century British salesman.

Since then, for everyone in the English-speaking world, at least, Turkish delight has been synonymous with its country of origin, as Turkish as Atatürk and bad moustaches.

Despite this, two years ago an enterprising loukoumi producer in the southern Cypriot municipality of Geroskipou registered "loukoumi Geroskipou" as a protected geographical indication (similar to a PDO, but not as restrictive) and now sells Cypriot delight throughout Europe.

As in the case of haloumi, the products are, essentially, identical and the Turks can still apply for their own PGI or PDO, but the general reaction in Turkey was as akin to that if, say, New Zealand stole the recipe for Vegemite and started marketing it as Kiwi Spread. Food and trade are supposed to be the great unifiers. In Cyprus, however, they seem to have had the reverse effect. Is now the time to suggest that we put differences aside and give peace a chance? Or would that be too cheesy?

Article from The Australian