

# Med-style diet 'can battle blues'

The Mediterranean diet, already thought to protect against heart disease and cancer, may also help to prevent depression, Spanish researchers say. They found depression was more than 30% less likely to develop in people who followed a diet high in vegetables, fruit and cereals, and low in red meat.

They studied 10,094 healthy adults over four years, the Journal of the American Medical Association reports.

However, the team stressed additional, larger-scale studies were required. Researchers at the Universities of Las Palmas and Navarra recruited university graduates to take part.

## Dietary patterns

They completed question-



naires and the researchers calculated their adherence to the Mediterranean dietary pattern (MDP) for an average of four-and-a-half years.

Participants who had a strong adherence to the MDP tended to be male, ex-smokers, married and older individuals.

They were more active physically and showed a higher

total energy intake.

The researchers identified 480 new cases of depression during the follow-up period - 156 in men and 324 in women.

They found that those with the highest adherence to the MDP were more than 30% less likely to develop depression.

They took into account marital status, the number of chil-

dren and factors associated with a healthy lifestyle and found the relationship did not change. Even taking account of personality traits, such as competitiveness and anxiety, had no effect on the results.

## 'More research needed'

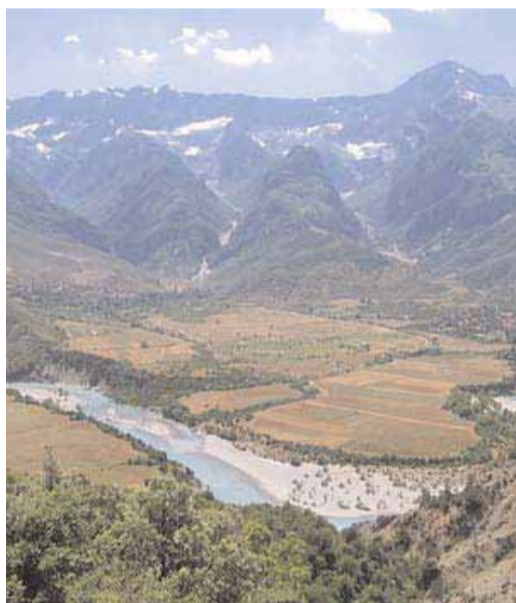
Professor Miguel Martinez-Gonzalez, of the University of Navarra, said the results would have to be confirmed in longer trials with more participants but they had found a strong inverse association between the Mediterranean diet and depression.

"Thirty per cent is a large reduction in the risk and this could be very important considering the large burden of disease represented by depression.

"We know how important the Mediterranean diet is in reducing cardiovascular risk factors and the same inflammatory proteins are also raised in patients with depression."

He said it was likely that the overall dietary pattern was more important than the effect of single components and "may exert a fair degree of protection against depression". Dr Cecilia D'Felice, a clinical psychologist, said there was mounting evidence for the importance of diet in treating depression. She said: "What we do know is that a diet high in olive oil will enhance the amount of serotonin or brain transmitter available to you.

"Most anti-depression drugs work to keep more serotonin available in the brain."



## Natural beauty hidden under the Pindos mountain range

Over 100 caves in the Pindos mountain range are awaiting the visitor to explore them. The blend of natural beauty, history and culture in these underground monuments are under the authority and responsibility of the Culture Ministry's Ephorate of Palaeo-anthropology and Speleology. Katafylli, Kotroni, Lamia, Katsarou, Paleolakka, Aetofolia and Spilitza are just a few of the more known caves where the visitor may admire the miracle of nature in a number of speleothems such as stalactites, stalagmites, cave curtains and columns, eccentricities and cave pearls. In some of them he will be able to tour underground lakes and rivers. A variety of species are seen in this environment such as moths, snails, dolichopodidae, pseudoscorpions, spiders, bats, salamanders and a whole new world, unknown to the most people. According to the Greek Speleology and Alpine Community, special equipment and specific knowledge is mandatory for those who would like to explore some of these caves more thoroughly.

# New Greek leader to tap diaspora

**ATHENS:** Greece's socialist leader, George Papandreou, has been sworn in as Prime Minister amid clear indications his Government will seek to tap talent in the diaspora to address the crises facing the country.

The English-speaking Prime Minister, propelled into office by an overwhelming victory in Sunday's elections, put the finishing touches to a cabinet expected to show a change in style, with more women and younger ministers.

Mr Papandreou has promised a 100-day plan to tackle Greece's financial and economic crisis and the social malaise that generated deadly riots last winter. His background and entourage suggest an approach more open to the wider world than that of the previous administration.

"Part of my identity is being a Greek of Greece and a Greek of the diaspora," Mr Papandreou said. "I think in many ways being Greek is being ecumenical, open to the world. We are a country that has always been open with ideas and contact with the rest of the world as a shipping nation and tourist destination."

The US-born leader, 57, was educated in Sweden, Britain and Canada, and is a Harvard fellow. His closest aides include English-speak-

ing Greeks born and brought up in Africa, America and Australia. He is himself more comfortable speaking English than Greek.

Through his network of connections as head of Socialist International, the global grouping of left-wing parties, Mr Papandreou has already embarked on talks with renowned economic and public health experts. The Nobel economics laureate Joseph Stiglitz is in touch "on a daily basis", advising how to rescue the economy from the brink of bankruptcy.

"George has always said there is an untapped world, and that is the other Greece in the diaspora that he is going to work with, talk to and take advice from to help us get the

country out of this situation," said Dimitris Dollis, a Greek Australian among Mr Papandreou's advisers.

Candidates for cabinet roles include George Papaconstantinou, a graduate of New York University and the London School of Economics who worked at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris, and Louka Katseli, a former Yale economics professor.

After years of introspection under the outgoing centre-right government, Greece is also expected to become far more "open and outward-looking" in its foreign policy under Mr Papandreou, a former foreign minister who won plaudits in the 1990s when he almost single-handedly improved relations with Turkey by daring to pursue reconciliation.

"Being parochial is a state of mind and we want to get out of it," said a source close to Mr Papandreou who will be one of his senior foreign affairs advisers. "The conservatives chose to tread water in a turbulent sea, no initiatives were taken and relations with neighbours gradually stalled. Our approach is going to be a lot more cosmopolitan, open and creative, which is George's natural inclination."

Amid speculation Mr Papandreou will assume responsibility for foreign affairs - at least initially - many are hoping for better ties with Turkey, Skopje and Europe.

