



Fishy business

TOURISTS visiting the Cycladic Islands often do so with the intention of sampling the region's various varieties of fish, wishing to experience both the land and its people through the tastes of the local traditional cuisine.

But over the past several years the imbalance between a limited supply of fresh fish and high demand during tourist season has led to tavernas and restaurants on islands most visited by tourists frequently being forced to serve frozen imported fish, which by law must be described as such on menus.

Local fishermen, chefs and restaurateurs are not happy and are trying to correct the errors of an insufficiently forward-looking fishing policy, although this is a very slow process.

Accordingly, the islands of the Aegean have far and away the most recipes for fish. Each island's cuisine has developed its own particular preferences for this or that type of fish, depending on the variety most often caught off their respective coasts.

In the Cyclades, broiled or baked fish can hold their own among all the other dishes on the menus. There is a pleasingly wide variety, and in many recipes the main ingredient can easily be replaced by another fish or beneficially supplemented by others, with no ill effects on flavour.

In any case, you should not miss an opportunity to taste fish if the Cyclades are on your vacation list this year. No matter if it's the fresh or frozen variety because there is so much joy to be had in savouring a Greek meal at the seaside.

Article from Athens News
Marianthi Milona

Size matters when it comes to lentils

Four things to look out for so you know that you're getting good-quality pulses

BY EVI VOUTSINA

The lentils found in the Greek market, predominantly the green and brown varieties, are basically arranged in two broad categories – large and small – that make no reference to their provenance. Both Greek and imported lentils are placed under these two categories, while they are also the most widely used in Greek cuisine. However, it is becoming easier to find a wider variety, including red lentils and the black Beluga variety, both of which are imported.

Here are some tips on what you need to be looking for when buying in Greece. Homogeneity in size rather than color is the most important thing to look for, as it is illegal for lentils of different sizes to be mixed together in the same package or even in the same large bag. On the other hand, if you see spots or a few wrinkles on the lentils, don't worry, it's perfectly normal.

One of the best ways to ensure that you're getting a fresh crop of lentils is to purchase them in bulk as soon as they arrive at your local grocery in the fall and then store them at home in an airtight jar.

Another tip when buying packaged lentils is to always look for transparent packaging so you know what you're getting. In fact, it is a European regulation that pulses should be sold in such packaging so consumers can check that they are getting the right variety, that they have been sorted properly and that packages don't contain too many foreign particles such as blades of grass, dirt, stones and so on.

If you'd rather purchase your pulses in bulk, make sure you know where they come from and shop only from a grocer that you trust, although the law does oblige vendors selling in bulk to state the country or region of origin, unlike with packaged pulses, although this is not always the case.



At the central market in Athens, the only information shoppers usually get about lentils is whether they are large or small. (Evi Voutsina)

Lentil and cabbage rolls (dolmades)

Ingredients (for about 40 dolmades)

- 1 large white cabbage
- 3 large onions, sliced in rolls
- 100 ml olive oil
- Salt
- For the stuffing**
- 250 gr small lentils, washed well
- 1 cup white rice
- 1 large onion, grated
- 3 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 bunch Mediterranean hartwort ("kafkalithres"), finely chopped
- 2 bunches shepherd's nettle ("myronia") leaves, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup lightly roasted pine nuts and roughly ground hazelnuts
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 50 ml olive oil

For the stuffing

In a medium-sized saucepan, place the lentils in cold water so they are covered by about 3-4 fingers. Bring to the boil over a high heat, lower the heat and allow to simmer for 25-30 minutes until slightly soft. Remove from the heat and pour out the water, leaving just 1 cup of liquid. Add the rice and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and remove from the heat. Leave it for 25-30 minutes until the rice is cooked and has absorbed all the liquid. Place the mixture in a bowl and add the chopped onions, nuts, greens, salt, pepper and olive oil.

For the wrapping

Remove the outer leaves of the



cabbage and the stalk. Place in a large pot of salted boiling water for 10-15 minutes until the leaves begin to soften. Remove and leave to cool on a plate. Separate the leaves and place the larger ones in the bottom of a large saucepan. Chop the rest into about 40 large strips.

Assembly

Lay one cabbage leaf at a time flat on a chopping board. Place 1 tbsp of

the mixture in the middle on the end closest to you, fold in the sides of the leaf and roll shut, but not too tightly, as the rice and lentils will expand. Meanwhile, lightly fry the onions, salt them and allow them to cool. In the large saucepan with the cabbage leaves lining the bottom, place a layer of dolmades and sprinkle with a few onions, then repeat. Pour in 2 cups of boiling water, then cover with a large plate turned upside down. Bring it to the boil over a high heat, then lower the heat, cover the pan and allow to simmer for 30 minutes, checking that there is always a bit of liquid. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for about 1 hour before serving.

QUICK & CHEAP EATS

Beef fillets in beer and mustard sauce

Average cost for 4-6 persons: 12 euros

Ingredients

- 800 gr finely sliced beef fillets, pounded
- 3-4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 250 ml lager beer
- 1 cup water
- 3 tbsp mild mustard
- 1 tsp corn flour
- 1 cup dill, finely chopped
- 1/2 tsp allspice (pimento spice), finely ground
- 1/2 tsp aniseed, finely ground
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a shallow dish, mix the allspice, aniseed, a pinch of salt and a good dose of freshly ground black pepper. Dip the meat slices in the mixture making sure it covers both sides.



In a deep, nonstick frying pan, heat the olive oil and saute the onions until soft on high heat. Add the beef fillets and brown on both sides for a total of four minutes. Add the beer and water and cook for 10-12 minutes. Meanwhile, in a bowl, mix the mustard, corn flour and dill and add gradually to the frying pan, shaking constantly so the mixture spreads evenly through the sauce. Remove from the heat when the sauce thickens. Serve with rice and peas.

MYRSINI LAMBRAKI

Help program is growing

WHEN Annette Livas launched her social skills program for children last year, she received a huge response.

After receiving \$25,000 from the Shane Warne Foundation in April, the Roseland mum and counsellor was inspired to share skills she used with her autistic son with others in similar situations.

She created the Cool Kids Social Skills Program for children with Asperges syndrome, autism, ADHD and other behavioural problems, aged seven to 12, to improve their social skills, peer friendships, develop emotional intelligence, self-esteem, self-control, decision-making and group skills.

Hoping to cater for 25 children, Mrs Livas was able to stretch the money to fit 70 children into the program.

"The classes which ran for five weeks were quite popular with parents, as they were an intensive hour-and-a-half class," Mrs Livas said.

"We deal with a lot of role plays with-



Great success: Annette Livas (left) runs workshops for children to improve their social skills and friendships. Picture: Lisa McMahon

in the group and watch specific DVDs in a session, to prepare them for a range of situations."

While the groups are mainly filled

with children aged seven to 12, they now also cater to children aged 13 to 18, with costs kept to a minimum with volunteers. Mrs Livas said each class had a maximum of six children, with four therapists.

"Parents have been happy with what we teach the children and the terminology we use, because they have noticed their children have taken it in," Mrs Livas said.

"I just want parents to know there is an alternative way for us to help children's behaviour."

A free talk about diet and behaviour will be held on Friday, March 19, at 480 King Georges Road, Beverly Hills.

RSVP: 95544365 or email admin@familysolutions.org.au.

BY SANDRA SIAGIAN
Article From The Leader



As well as promising visitors a traditional Greek welcome, the tourism ministry's 'kalimera' campaign is being billed as a means to lead the country towards economic recovery