



Nature's bounty with a twist

by Helen Varvaritis-Tourikis

BACK in the days before home-delivered food and supermarket shopping hyper-availability, people had pantries stocked with cured meats, pickles and preserves to make it through the year.

The old-fashioned tradition of preserving nature's bounty has been given a modern renaissance thanks to Vasiliki Karounou, 55, a technology analyst and founder of Acordo Artisan + Natural Corfu Specialty Foods.

Making its first appearance in the autumn of 2008, the Acordo specialty foods consist of a range of superb pftus, jellies, marmalades and preserves that are created from the produce of the family's privately owned farm in Triklino, Corfu.

Although a young company, Acordo's principles and ideals are deeply rooted in the history of the island itself and of the family of the founder, who has held a lifelong passion for natural homemade food products. "It may be just a few years in operation, but it feels as if we've been around for a long time," explains Karounou, with her infectious positive attitude. "It was in 2003, when I was giving a seminar for agricultural development, that I presented a case study on the market for natural traditional Greek products. It was from that case study that I developed the Acordo concept," she adds.

Karounou defines her philosophy on gastronomy and lifestyle through the brand name *acordo*, which means agreement in Italian. She breaks down the concept into three parts - agreement with the client and establishing a relationship of trust, agreement with traditional methods and, finally, agreement with healthy living starting with healthy eating, as no chemicals or preservatives are used in the products.

Enthusiasm in a jar

The Acordo business model incorporates the flavours of a talented *nikokira* (housewife) with savvy marketing skills to create amazing products that are mandatory in a Mediterranean kitchen. "With our pftus you can toss a spoonful from one or two jars in with some pasta and you will have the most amazing dish", suggests Karounou, whose enthusiasm inspires you to become creative with the Acordo range.

"Right now I am very excited by our latest product that is particular to Corfu, but rarely made," she adds. "I have taken this recipe from my husband's mother. It is *kankiofoles salata* (Jerusalem artichoke salad). With all the herbs and spices that we add it is like an exotic potato salad".

Although Jerusalem artichoke sounds like

a foreign product for the Ionian island, it has a transcontinental history. "Kankiofoles, which is actually the root of a type of sunflower, is native to north America. The French brought it to Europe after discovering it from the natives and later, when they inhabited Corfu, they introduced it here, making it a Corfiot specialty".

The only exceptions from the range of Acordo products that are not made by Acordo are the *katsikisio ladotyri* (goat's cheese in oil), made by a local artisan cheesemaker but matured in olive oil and preserved by Karounou, and the cured meats: the Corfiot *salami salado* and the Acordo bestseller, the *nouboulo afumicado*, a whole pork loin, spiced and cured in natural intestine and then smoked, resulting in a superb cured pork that is both healthy and surprisingly versatile - thinly sliced for meze, added to flavour pasta or risotto or tossed in a bean salad. "These products complete our range. The *nouboulo* is something very special and a great standby for when friends drop by," says Karounou.

Creative escape

In April of this year Karounou and her husband launched the *Ambelonas Corfu*, a place that combines relaxation, culture and gastronomy, nestled within the family vineyard. "What we have found is that even an average person carries a great deal of creative potential.

At *Ambelonas Corfu* we host various events and workshops where people can discover different things. On June 25 we are hosting the *Yiorti me louloudia kai balandes* (Festival of flowers and ballads)". It will be an event where people can learn the Japanese art of *ikebana* (flower arrangement), listen to folk music by American artist Jessica Kilroy and at the same time indulge in dishes created from Acordo foods.

Karounou describes *Ambelonas Corfu* as not so much a restaurant in the traditional sense, but a place that takes you on a journey of tastes. The menu consists of Acordo standards and is augmented daily with dishes inspired by the fresh produce found on the grounds of the vineyard.

Summarising her philosophy about gastronomy and lifestyle, Karounou says: "Ambelonas Corfu and Acordo products are not about cooking for 5 hours to eat in 30 minutes, but about cooking for 30 minutes to enjoy eating for hours".

Acordo Artisan

+ **Natural Corfu Specialty Foods**
Ambelonas Corfu
Triklino, region of Kompitsi, Corfu
Phone 26610-52301

Heartening news for coffee drinkers

Women with heart disease who down a few cups of coffee each day tend to live as long as those who avoid the beverage, according to a study.

The results, reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, add to already mixed findings on whether caffeinated coffee is a hazard for people at high risk of cardiovascular problems.

The study, which followed nearly 12,000 US nurses with a history of heart disease or stroke, found that those who regularly drank caffeinated coffee were no more likely to die than non-coffee drinkers during the study period, which spanned more than 20 years for some participants.

In fact, no link was found between a woman's coffee intake and her risk of death from heart attack, stroke or any other cause - and this was true of even of women who drank four or more cups of coffee each day.

"Our results suggest that coffee drinking is okay for patients with cardiovascular disease, but it would be desirable to replicate our results in other populations," said lead researcher Esther Lopez-Garcia, of *Universidad Autonoma de Madrid* in Spain.

The results came from the long-running *Nurses' Health Study*, which began tracking more than 100,000 female nurses in 1976. The researchers focused on 11,697 women who developed heart disease or had a stroke sometime between 1976 and 2002.

Of those women, 62 percent continued to drink caffeinated coffee after their diagnosis.

Overall, 1,159 women had died by 2004. That risk was no greater among coffee drinkers than non-drinkers, including women who drank at least four cups a day.



58th Sydney Film Festival – it's a wrap!

Sydneysiders braved one of the coldest winters in many years to make the 2011 Sydney Film Festival another resounding success.

"Revenue targets were exceeded and total box office takings were higher than ever, despite reduced capacity due to renovations underway around the State Theatre, and having one day less in the Festival," says CEO Leigh Small.

Sold-out sessions increased to 72 in 2011 from 63 last year, and percentage capacity attendance increased significantly, resulting in nearly half of all sessions being over 95% full.

Sydney Film Festival continues to be more accessible to more people. There was an increase in the number of people attending this year's festival, due to a higher number of single ticket and flexipass sales.

The festival wrapped on Sunday 19 June with the Australian Premiere of *Beginners*, directed by Mike Mills and featuring Ewan McGregor (SFF's 2010 guest for *Ghost Writer*), Christopher Plummer and Milanie Laurent.

The 12 day film festival achieved over 110,000 attendances and encompassed 161 titles: 75 features, 39 documentaries, 34 short films, 13 retrospective titles, 10 World premieres and 86 Australian premieres, including 29 Australian productions and films from 42 countries in 47 languages.

This year the Sydney Film Festival introduced 27 new sponsors and six new venues, including expanded screenings at Events Cinemas George St, international television marathons at AF-TRS, collaboration with Creative Sydney at MCA, talks at Grasshopper Bar, Town Hall and the Apple Store in George St and an outdoor screen in Martin Place.

About Sydney Film Festival

Sydney Film Festival screens feature films, documentaries, short films and animations across the city including the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays and the Art Gallery of NSW. The festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest running film festivals. For more information visit <http://www.sff.org.au>

Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Department of Trade and Investment, through Arts NSW and the Office of Trade, Business and Industry, the Federal Government through Screen Australia, and the City of Sydney. The festival's Strategic partner is the NSW Government through Events NSW. The festival's Official Competition sponsor is iShares.