



Next is Vathia, Mani's best-known and postcard-pretty settlement on the top of a hill, consisting mainly of tower houses – some restored but now decaying again – and offering breathtaking views.

At the end of the road south, via the peaceful fishing village of Porto Kagio, there is a beautiful cove, with the ruins of the Church of Aghioi Asomatoi and the ancient Temple of Poseidon. On the other side of the cove, there is a sea cave from where souls in antiquity were believed to descend into Hades. A path from here will lead you in less than 40 minutes to Cape Tainaron, mainland Europe's southernmost point, with a lighthouse built in 1887. The view is magnificent, giving one the feeling of standing on the edge of the world.

The eastern coast of Mani, south of the town of Gytheio, also has picturesque villages and some excellent beaches.

Kotronas, in a secluded bay, is one of the most attractive settlements.

The area of the historic town of Oitylo, around the protected bay of Limeni north of Areopoli, has been described as an "open museum," featuring some of Mani's best sights, such as the Kelefas castle.

Unlike inner Mani, the lush area of what is known as outer Mani stretches further up along the Messeniakos Gulf, with rich flora and fauna and lends itself to some excellent country walks.

**FACT FILE**

The Mani Peninsula, also long known by its medieval name Maina or Maina, is a geographical and cultural region in Greece. The capital city of Mani is Areopoli. Mani is the central peninsula of the three which extend southwards from the Peloponnese in southern Greece. To the east is the Laconian Gulf, to the west the Messenian Gulf. The peninsula forms a continuation of the Taygetos mountain range, the western spine of the Peloponnese. Mani is home of the Maniots (Maniates in Greek).

It merits a separate presentation in a future issue.

**WHAT TO SEE**

The top highlights in Mani are the Diros Caves and the towers of Vathia, but the towers are everywhere to be admired. From Gytheion, take a boat to the islet of Marathonisi to see the Historical and Ethnological Museum of Mani in the Tzanetakis tower; also visit the ancient theater. Villages worth stopping at: Skoutari, with wonderful sea views; Kotronas, where many buildings include architectural parts of an ancient city; Kokkala, Aghios Nikolaos, Olympies, Speira, Lagia, Nyfi, Gialos and Alypa, where 1982's "Tempest," starring John Cassavetes, was filmed.

# what's COOKING?



## Traditional Mani flavors

The limited means of this Peloponnesian region led to its very distinct cuisine

Mani, an arid, rugged region in southern Greece, provides limited ingredients, the most famous of which is its cured pork that is used to create delicacies that once were exported across Europe. These days, Mani's home-cured pork, or "siglino," is made from the meat of pigs slaughtered in early winter, cured for six days, smoked with sage, then boiled in wine and stored in earthenware jars with oil or pork fat along with boiled orange peel. It is an excellent meze for wine or in

omelettes. Mani's pork sausages are made from finely chopped cured pork, pork fat, plenty of finely sliced orange peel, pepper and thyme and wrapped in pork entrails. The sausages are then lightly grilled in order to dry. Wild quail used to be caught as they flew over Cape Tenaro and were then cured with local rock salt, which, along with olive oil, was the only means of preserving food. These days, cured quail are only to be found at local grocery

stores and cottage industries. Here we offer two recipes, the traditional Maniot egg-based dish known as "kagianas," with greens, as well as a local version of spaghetti carbonara without cream but with "siglino," the smoky, strong flavor of which is an ideal replacement for bacon. Try them with one of Laconia's lesser-known wines, such as the white Kydonitsa or Petroulianos, or the red Mavroudi or Thrapsa, available at larger wine stores and supermarkets.



### Carbonara with siglino

**INGREDIENTS (serves 4)**

- 1 packet of spaghetti
- 6 egg yolks as fresh as possible
- 250 gr Maniot siglino, cut in thin strips
- Dry myzithra cheese, grated, for serving
- Freshly ground pepper
- Zest of one unwaxed, organic orange

**METHOD**

Heat a nonstick frying pan over a moderate heat and when hot, add the siglino without any added oil or fat. Fry for 5-7 minutes until crisp. Remove from the pan and leave to drain on kitchen paper. Boil the spaghetti in 5 liters of salted water in accordance with the instructions on the packet. Drain, setting aside 1 cup of the water, keeping it hot. Beat the egg yolks in a bowl large enough to hold the cooked pasta. Add 5-6 tablespoons of the reserved water to the eggs and mix vigorously so the yolks don't solidify when the hot pasta is added. Add the well-drained pasta while still hot and mix carefully for 2-3 minutes with a large fork; that way the yolks will be cooked (and made safe to eat) by the heat of the pasta without curdling. If the yolks begin to solidify, add another 1 or 2 spoonfuls of the hot water. The carbonara sauce is ready when it is thick but not solidified. Add the siglino, plenty of pepper and distribute the pasta to individual plates. At the last minute before serving, sprinkle each with the orange zest and grated cheese.

### Kagianas with greens

**INGREDIENTS (serves 4)**

- 1 kg mixed wild greens in season
- 75 ml olive oil
- 1 leek (the white part), finely sliced
- Leaves of half a bunch of herbs (marjoram, oregano, mint, fennel or dill)
- Leaves of a quarter bunch of parsley, finely chopped
- 6 eggs, preferably organic, beaten
- Juice of half a lemon
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

**METHOD**

Clean the greens, removing all the stalks and leaving about 500-600 gr. Wash and drain well and cut roughly. Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan over a moderate heat and saute the leeks for 2 minutes until wilted. Add the greens and cook for up to 4-5 minutes over a high heat to release their liquid. Add the herbs and parsley, mix well and add the beaten eggs. Cook while stirring continuously for 1 or 2 minutes until the eggs set. Remove from the heat immediately, add the salt, pepper and lemon juice, stir and serve.

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