**THE COOKING OF GREECE**

**![C:\Users\heather\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\H6WNWJH5\MC900015918[1].wmf]()HISTORY**

As one of the first centres of civilization, Greece and its food culture has a history that can be traced back to antiquity. The ancient Greeks enjoyed food and dined quite lavishly.

In early Greece, only two meals a day were customarily eaten: a light meal at noon and a big meal later in the day. This second meal often consisted of enough food for a banquet and was usually divided into two parts – the first for eating and the second for drinking and conversing.

About 400 B.C., Hippocrates, a Greek physician, treated disease with controlled diets. However, unlike scientific nutrition of today, this treatment was based primarily on imagination and superstition and often failed to produce the desired curative results.

The early Greek cuisine included several dishes that are still popular today. The Greeks claim that their ancestors developed the first white sauce and brown sauce as well as the first pastry. One of the favorite dishes of the early Greeks was cheesecake.

Through the centuries Greek cooks have handed down recipes from generations to generations. Today, the Greek cuisine consists of many variations of recipes that have survived the centuries of Greek history as well as recipes that are new or have been adopted from the cuisine of other countries.

**CHARACTERISTICS**

![C:\Users\heather\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\6AOLY7NE\MC900347091[1].wmf]()As with all countries, Greece embraces many cooking styles. Greek food is influenced by Italian and Middle Eastern cuisine. However, as a food style in general, several characteristics stand out – the wide use of olives, grapes, lemons, herbs, lamb, seafood, sauces, vegetables and the famous Greek pastry.

Olive trees have grown in Greece so far back in ancient times that legend calls them “gifts of the gods.” Even recipes of other countries with “a la Grecque” in their names are understood to require olive oil as an ingredient. Olives, as well as olive oil, find their way into many of the Greek rice dishes and salads.

The Greeks use both the fruit and leaves of their large grape crops. A portion of the fruit is used to make wine which is the common beverage at meals. The tender grape leaves, stuffed with ground meat or other fillings are used as appetizers or as a main dish.

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Another indispensable ingredient in the Greek cuisine is lemon. Lemon halves, wedges or lemon juice are used when cooking meats, fish, poultry and vegetables. A lemon half impaled on a fork is used as a basting brush for roasted or broiled foods; and lemon wedges are always on the table at a mealtime to be squeezed over foods.

Besides lemons, Greek cooks use herbs generously. Garlic and oregano are used in lamb dishes; thyme or oregano with fish; dill with eggplant and in spinach pie; and marjoram and thyme with a bay leaf in tomato sauce. Baked fish, stuffed grape leaves and rice stuffing for poultry often include mint.

Lamb is the most popular meat in Greece. In addition, chicken and rabbit are commonly used in cooking. Beef isn’t readily available. Goat’s milk is used both as a beverage and for making cheese and yogurt. The cheeses include feta and kefalotiri, a hard, pale yellow grating type cheese similar to Parmesan.

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Since Greece is a peninsula, fresh seafood is readily available. Octopus, squid, red mullet, perch and shrimp are often served with vegetables. Although the Greeks frequently use the simple method of frying, the fish may be marinated before cooking. Fish is baked or broiled with lemon-oil sauce or stuffed with herbs, garlic and onions.

The Greeks are extremely fond of sauces. The most famous Greek sauce is an egg-lemon combination called avgolemono sauce. This all-purpose sauce in used over meat, fish, vegetables and in soups. Other basic Greek sauces include tomato sauce and garlic sauce.

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![C:\Users\heather\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\6AOLY7NE\MC900036389[1].wmf]()Vegetables are staples in the Greek diet. Tomatoes, green peppers, artichokes and eggplant are all popular in Greek cooking. Eggplant is served fried, stewed and stuffed. Slices are used in moussaka with ground lamb, white sauce and cheese. Vegetable salads are another important part of the Greek meal. Green salads often include chicory or dandelion greens along with romaine lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber and olives.

Fruit is the typical dessert, but the Greeks are also known for their sweet breads and pastries. Phyllo (or filo) is the Greek all-purpose pastry. The dough is made of flour, water and salt; stretched into tissue-thin sheets. Phyllo may be filled with a savoury filling as in spanakopita or with nuts as in baklava. Honey is the most common sweetener used in baking. The sweet rich desserts are served for holidays and other special occasions.

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**PORT OF CALL – GREECE**



At the tip of the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe is the country of Greece. About four-fifths of Greece, called the mainland, is connected to the continent of Europe. The Greek mainland is bordered on the North and Northeast by the countries of Albania, Macedonia (also known as Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, or F.R.Y.O.M.), Bulgaria, and Turkey. The Aegean Sea lies to Greece’s east, and the Ionian Sea lies to its west. To the south is the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Crete. About one-fifth of Greece’s total land is made up of islands that lie in the Aegean and Ionian seas. Altogether, Greece is approximately the size of the state Alabama.

Greece is known for its natural beauty and its warm, Mediterranean climate. Much of the country is mountainous and rugged. There are, however, several plains on the eastern side of the mainland. The Greek islands are generally mountainous, with dry, stony soil. In the lowland areas of Greece, summers are hot and dry, and winters are rainy – the perfect climate for growing olives that are such an important part of Greek cuisine!

**FOOD TRAVELER’S NOTES**

**AGRICULTURE**

Few crops will grow in the dry, rocky soil of Greece’s mountains. Therefore much of the country is unsuitable for farming. In the plains areas, however, the fertile soil and warm climate combine to produce many different kinds of crops. Sugar beets, wheat, corn, olives, and tomatoes are the largest crops. Fruit crops, including grapes, peaches and citrus fruits are also common. Poultry, sheep, and goats are the primary kinds of livestock.

**PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE**

Approximately 10.6 million people live in the Greek mainland and the islands. This is a large number of people for the amount of land available – the overall population density is about 207 persons per square mile (80 per square kilometer). About 98% of the country’s total population is Greek. The most common language is Modern Greek, or Demotike.

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Traditions and family ties are very important to the Greeks. Greek holidays are celebrated with traditional foods and food customs. At Easter, the most important Greek holiday, the traditional meal is herb-seasoned, roasted lamb. Braided bread is another traditional Easter food in Greece. Roast pig, holiday breads, and butter cookies are traditional Christmas foods.

**DINING**

Greek cuisine is based on the foods that grow best in Greece. Olives and olive oils are part of almost every recipe. Many dishes contain vegetables that are grown locally, such as eggplants, zucchinis, and artichokes. Honey, which is found wild in all parts of Greece, is a sweetener used in many Greek treats.

Greek breakfasts are usually simple and light - often fresh fruit, cheese, bread and strong coffee. Lunch is usually eaten around 1:00 or 2:00pm. In the cities, this meal is also fairly light, much like lunches in the United States. In more rural areas, however, lunch is the main meal of the day. Dinner is usually a family meal, usually eaten around 10:00pm. It may consist of an appetizer, salad, a meat or fish dish, vegetables, and potatoes, pasta or rice. In areas where lunch is the main meal, dinner is usually much lighter.

**GREEK FOOD BRIEFS**

**MOUSSAKA**

The popular Greek dish *moussaka* is served throughout Greece. Traditional moussaka consists of layers of sliced eggplant and ground lamb or beef, baked and covered with a white sauce. Although the eggplant moussaka is most common, variations of the dish contain other types of vegetables. For example, a light summertime version of moussaka uses potatoes and zucchini instead of eggplant. This version is especially popular in the Greek islands. Another popular version of moussaka is made with artichoke hearts in place of eggplant.

**DOLMADES**

*Dolmades* (pronounced dohl-mah-dehs and sometimes spelled “dolmathes”) are stuffed grape or cabbage leaves – one of Greece’s most famous foods. To make dolmades with grape leaves, the Greek cook either uses the leaves fresh off the vine or, more commonly, leaves that have been preserved in salt water. Dolmades may be stuffed with any of a variety of fillings. One of the most popular fillings is a mixture of ground lamb, rice, onions, currants, pine nuts and various seasonings. Dolmades have a long history in the Greek culture – dating back to ancient Greece, where fig leaves were sometimes used to wrap foods.

**SPANAKOPITA**

Whether for lunch, dinner or a snack, *spanakopita* – or spinach pie – is a Greek favorite. The flaky spanakopita crust is made with *phyllo* dough, which is a delicate, tissue-thin pastry. The pie filling is a mixture of spinach, onions, eggs, and feta cheese – a crumbly, salty, white cheese usually made with goat’s milk. Spanakopita can either be served hot, as a main dish; or cold, as an appetizer or snack.

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**Name:** ­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Block:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Unit:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**GREECE WORKSHEET**

Use “The Cooking of Greece” & “Port of Call: Greece” to complete questions

1. In Early Greece, how many meals were customarily eaten each day? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Greek cooking is influenced by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ cuisine.
3. Give two uses of lemons in Greek cooking:
	1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
	2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name 6 herbs commonly used in Greek cooking:

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1. Besides lamb, name two other popular types of meat commonly used in Greek cooking:

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1. What is *kefalotiri*? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What is it made from? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What Italian ingredient is most like kefalotiri? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is the name of the most famous Greek sauce and what is in it?

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1. Name four popular vegetables in Greece:

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1. The all-purpose pastry of Greece is called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Name one Greek appetizer: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Name one Greek dessert: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. When are sweet rich desserts most often served?

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1. Why is much of the land in Greece unsuitable for farming?

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1. Modern Greek is the most common language spoken in Greece today; it is also known as: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the most important Greek holiday celebrated in Greece?

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1. Name two traditional foods served during this most important holiday:

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1. What important food crop in Greece is used in almost every recipe? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the main ingredients in moussaka and what Italian dish is it most similar to?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. What types of leaves are commonly used today to make dolmades? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In ancient times what kind of leaf was used? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is the Greek name for spinach pie? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

When can it be served? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. What is feta cheese? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_