

# A selection of Cretan Recipes

# Meat

*The people in Kamilari used to get their supplies in meat from the animals they raised in their small farms for the needs of their families.*

*Pork was consumed during Christmas and New Year's Eve times. Since they couldn't freeze it (there was no electricity), they smoked it in the fireplaces, boiled and salted it, and kept it in jars.*

## **"Apaki"**

### **Smoked pork meat - a delicacy**

The pork meat used for "apaki" is cut in strips and left in a bowl with vinegar for 2 days. Then, it is salted, peppered and hung over the fireplace for a couple of days. They burnt various herbs like faskomilo, which gave a different taste.

## **Siglina**

*Siglina are small pieces of pork meat (sometimes with the fat and the skin).*

Put salt, pepper and cumin. Fry the meat in olive oil for about 20 minutes. Then, put it in a deep dish and pour all the oil from the pan it's fried in. Let it cool and keep it in the refrigerator.

This is not a main meal, but can be used in omelettes or cooked with spinach or greens.

## **Pork meat with chickpeas**

- 1 kg of pork meat
- 1/2 kg of chickpeas
- 1/2 cup of olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 1/2 kg of finely chopped tomatoes
- salt, pepper

Cut the meat into cubes and brown it with the onion in a pot. Add the tomato and let it boil for a while. Strain the chickpeas (which have been soaking in water since the evening before) and put them in the pot.

Cover with water, add salt and pepper and boil until cooked.

*In this way, chickpeas or dry beans can be cooked with lamb or even greens or vegetables.*

## **Lamb (or rabbit, or chicken) with okra or string beans**

1kg meat cut into serving pieces  
1kg okra or beans  
4 chopped tomatoes and a cup of tomato juice  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1 chopped onion  
some vinegar (only for okra)  
salt and pepper  
garlic, if desired

Wash the okra, sprinkle with vinegar and let them stand in the sun for a couple of hours (if you cook beans, just wash them).

Put the meat in the pot with the olive oil, the onion and the garlic.

Add the tomatoes, the tomato juice and 1 cup of water, and cook till the meat is almost tender.

Then add the okra, salt, pepper, a little water if needed, and cook for another half an hour.

## **Lamb (or goat kid) with artichokes, in egg-lemon sauce**

1 kg meat cut into pieces  
8 artichokes  
2 or 3 fresh onions  
1 cup finely chopped dill and fennel  
1 cup olive oil  
1 egg, 2 lemons  
salt, pepper

Prepare the artichokes, peel them and put their hearts in lemon water.

Cook the meat in the olive oil and add the chopped onion, the dill and fennel, the salt and pepper, and 2 cups of water. Let it boil.

Before the meat is ready, add the artichokes. Cook for about 20 minutes.

Prepare the lemon sauce. Beat the lemon juice with the eggs and add a few spoonfuls of broth.

Remove the pot from the fire to keep the sauce from curdling, pour the mixture over the meat and artichokes, and stir.

*During fasting period (before Christmas and Easter), you can substitute meat with peas, potatoes or broad beans, without egg-lemon sauce.*

# Fish

*The people in the region of Kamilari did not consume much fish, as it was impossible to keep it, since there was no electricity till 1968. Their favorite fish dish was tinned fish (salmon, sardines and squid) and salted fish.*

*Nevertheless, their agricultural activities were beneath the Phaestos hill, where Geropotamos river ran all year round, and the residents trapped eels, crabs and other river fish.*

## **Fried salted cod**

1 kg of salted cod  
1 cup flour  
2 cups water  
olive oil for frying

Desalt the cod cut in slices by leaving it in water for 24 hours and changing the water frequently.

Make a batter with the water and flour.

Dip the cod slices, one by one, in this batter and fry them in hot olive oil till it's brown on both sides.

*Can be served with salad and boiled or fried potatoes.*

## **Snails – “Hohli”**

*The most characteristic Cretan food*

*Snails are gathered after rain, preferably in early spring and in summer, under big or smaller stones. They are kept in loosely knit sacks.*

*They must be carefully cleaned and the membrane must be removed before cooking.*

*Put the snails in boiling, salted water, with some vinegar. Then, clean them one by one, with a small knife, scraping away the membrane that may still be around the shell. Rinse well and the snails are ready to be cooked...*

## **Boiled snails**

The cleaned snails are put in fresh, salted boiling water for 5 minutes. They are ready when they can be pulled out of their shell with a pin, a toothpick or a fork. Dip them in a dish with vinegar.

## **Snails "boubouristi" ("upside down")**

1/2 kg large snails  
1/2 cup olive oil for frying  
salt  
a cup of vinegar  
rosemary, if desired

Spread a thin layer of salt (2-3 teaspoons) in a frying pan and place the snails upon it in a single layer, open side down. Put the pan on the fire.

After 5 minutes, add olive oil and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour in vinegar and rosemary and serve them together with the sauce of the pan in a deep dish.

## **Snails with various vegetables**

Snails can be cooked with potatoes, vegetables, rice or "chondros" (which is ground wheat). After preparing the snails as described, add onion, tomatoes, salt, pepper, parsley and carrot in a pot. Then add the snails, water, and one of the vegetables of your choice.

## **Vegetables and wild Greens**

*As the people grew their own vegetables, they found many different ways to cook them. The greens were collected in the fields and were usually boiled and eaten as salad. Women were experts in collecting greens, and this is something we still do.*

*Vegetables are either boiled in salted water or cooked as a stew with lots of onions, fresh tomatoes, and always with potatoes.*

*Fried potatoes, courgettes and aubergines with tomato sauce fried in the pan has always been an easy way to prepare the family meal.*

## **Stuffed courgette flowers, vine leaves or cabbage leaves**

As many courgette flowers, vine leaves or cabbage leaves as you can get  
1/2 kg rice  
1 cup olive oil  
1/2 kg ripe tomatoes  
2 onions  
salt, pepper  
parsley, mint and fennel

The flowers have to be picked in the morning, so that they will be open. Wash them and prepare the stuffing. Put the rice in a big bowl. Chop the parsley, the mint, the fennel leaves, the onions and the tomatoes, very finely. Add the oil, the rice, the salt and pepper and water, and mix.

Stuff the flowers, and place them in a pot in rows. Cover in water, add some oil, put a plate over them to keep them from opening and let them cook until the rice can be eaten.

*If you use vine or cabbage leaves instead of courgette flowers, you must boil them until they become soft, before stuffing and rolling them.*

## **Pulses**

*Pulses used to be, and still are, the most basic component of the Cretan diet. The most popular pulses that people, not only ate, but grew as well, were lentils, broad beans, chickpeas, peas and beans in general.*

*The Cretans consumed beans all year round, but in summer, they preferred the fresh string beans. Pulses were dried, and then conserved in "pithi" (jars), in cool places in the house.*

*Pulses were cooked in various ways, like soup, with meat, or even salad.*

### **Split pea purée (fava)**

1/2 kg split peas  
water  
1 onion  
salt  
olive oil

Put split peas in salted water and boil. When most water has gone, stir often until it becomes mushy, or mash in multi-mixer.

Serve the purée with oil, raw onion, olives and olive oil.

### **Lentil soup**

1/2 kg lentils  
olive oil  
1/2 kg grated tomatoes or tomato juice  
1 finely chopped onion  
2 cloves of garlic  
2 bay leaves  
vinegar  
salt

Fill a pot with water. Add the lentils and boil them for 10 minutes, then strain. Put the chopped onion with the oil, add the lentils, the garlic, the tomatoes, water to cover them, salt, pepper and the bay leaves. Cook for half an hour. Pour in the vinegar, and remove from the fire.

## **Pasta**

### **Manghiri**

- 1 cup water
- 1/2 kg flour
- 1/2 l olive oil
- salt
- olive oil for frying

Prepare the dough with the water, the flour, the salt and the olive oil. Let it stand for about an hour and then divide into 3-4 pieces and roll out in thin sheets.

First cut each sheet into strips, then into square pieces. Sprinkle them with flour so they will not stick. Boil half of them in salted water.

Fry the other half in the oil and then empty them, together with the oil, in the pot with the boiled ones: stir and serve hot.

### **Hilofta**

- 1 cup water
- 1/2 kg flour
- 1/2 l olive oil
- salt
- grated "anthotyro" cheese, if desired

Prepare the dough with the olive oil, the water and salt. Roll out the dough, and cut out long, narrow pieces.

Boil in water with a little salt and olive oil for about 20 minutes. Serve with grated cheese if desired.

# Cheese

*The people in our region made their own cheese from the goats they usually kept at home. The family needs in milk and cheese were great, as families numbered sometimes up to even ten members.*

*They only made **tyrozouli**, a mild rather hard cheese, which they kept in olive oil. **Anthotyros** is a rather salty and hard cheese, that they grated on pasta. **Myzithra**, a very soft cheese, is eaten very fresh, without salt, and is used to stuff most of the pies.*

*All Cretans love these cheeses and we are lucky that we can still get them.*

# Pies

*Crete was, and continues to be, famous for its pastry food. It is also very popular, among the Cretan people and their guests, to stuff the pies with the unique in taste Cretan cheese.*

## **Fried spinach and wild greens pies**

1 kg wild greens and spinach  
finely chopped dill, or fennel, or both  
1 dried finely chopped onion and 2-3 fresh onions  
olive oil  
salt, pepper  
**For the dough:**  
1/2 kg flour  
1 cup water  
olive oil  
salt  
raki  
olive oil for frying

Fry onions and greens in the oil and strain them for a while. Add salt and pepper.

Prepare the dough with the above ingredients and divide it into 3-4 balls. Roll each one out, in thin sheets. Cut out circles or square pieces, and put 1 tbsp of the mixture on each piece.

Fold and close the edges firmly, pressing them down with a fork.

Fry in olive oil until golden brown on both sides.

## Sarikopites

1/2 kg flour  
1 cup water  
olive oil  
raki  
salt

### **For the filling:**

1/2 kg myzithra  
honey

Prepare a normal dough for pies.

Roll out the dough and cut it in long, wide strips. Spread the myzithra along the strips, and fold them. From one end, twist in a spiral. The shape reminds you the "sariki" (the traditional head-cover of Cretan men), and that's why the pies are called "sarikopites".

Fry in olive oil until golden brown and serve with honey.

## Sweets

### Easter "Kallitsounia" or "Lihnarakia" (small oil lamps)

#### **For the dough:**

1 cup olive oil  
1 cup milk  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon baking powder diluted in 3 tbsps lemon juice  
1 kg flour

#### **For the filling:**

1,5 kg myzithra cheese  
2 eggs  
1/2 kg sugar  
1 tbsp cinnamon powder

Prepare the dough with the above ingredients, and leave to stand till you prepare the filling.

Mix the myzithra with the rest of the ingredients for the filling.

Roll pieces of dough into small, thick circles. Place 1 teaspoon of the filling on each circle and give them the shape of oil lamps with your fingers, joining the edges. Then beat the eggs, and with a brush dab them, and sprinkle cinnamon. Bake for half an hour.

## **Quince spoon sweet**

1 kg peeled quinces  
1 kg sugar  
3 cups water  
the juice of 1 lemon  
2 vanillas  
almonds without the skin

Peel the quinces and cut them into fine slices. Put them in a bowl of water, with lemon juice.

Meanwhile, prepare the syrup by boiling the sugar with the water for 15 minutes. Then add the quince pieces and boil until it is soft and sticky. Before removing the pot from the fire, add the vanillas, the almonds and the lemon juice.

## **Grape spoon sweet**

2 kg grapes (without seeds)  
1 kg sugar  
lemon juice  
1/2 cup water  
vanilla extract  
almonds without the skin

Wash and drain the grapes without the stems.

Put the grapes in a pot, with sugar. Add the lemon juice.

Add 1/2 cup water and boil till the syrup becomes sticky.

Add the vanilla and the almonds.

When cold, store in sterilized jars.