

"Kali Orexi!" (Bon Appetit!)

Where and how to find a good restaurant?

There must be hundreds of restaurants and taverns on the island(s). Some are great, of course, and some aren't. But how do you recognise a good restaurant before getting disappointed?

If you have the possibility, ask someone. Greek people are usually very fussy about going to good restaurants and being served fresh food, so they will know. Ask other tourists, surely they will have had some good experiences.

Preferably, choose restaurants that look clean and tidy, but not necessarily all fancy. Sometimes very simple places have the best food. If you see many people sitting somewhere, especially Greeks, it is likely to be a good restaurant. (However, this rule applies at Greek eating times - Greeks for example don't usually go out for dinner before 10 pm!)

What to eat?

The Greek cuisine has a big variety of wonderful foods. Unfortunately many people think it is only meat and nothing else! But the Greek cuisine offers a lot even if you are a vegetarian!

The only problem is that as a foreigner you usually read the menu and don't know half the stuff, so you don't know what to choose! (It would be even worse if you knew what you were missing...)

There are many starters that are very delicious and can easily make your meal without a main dish. And don't forget to enjoy all the fresh vegetables, they are **very** tasty here. The tomatoes are incredible!

Tips: Don't just stick to the menu if you are in a restaurant. The Greeks don't read menus much, usually they ask the chef what is on the menu or go directly into the kitchen to choose. This still happens, so don't be surprised, but rather flattered, if you are asked into the kitchen! Be open-minded and do so! Sometimes things are not even written on the menu. Ask the waiter or chef for recommendations. It is best to avoid cooked food (like stews) in the low season unless you are sure that it is fresh. Ask for the meal-of-the-day recommendation, which will most likely be fresh.

Fish & meat are usually ordered and charged by the **kilo**, which doesn't mean you have to take a kilo.

Optional: You can always have something added or taken away, they are very flexible. For example take the Greek Salad without feta if you don't like the cheese.

Greek habits:

The Greeks don't usually order individual dishes except for the main meal. They order a sufficient amount of starters and share them to have a variety. This usually leads to over-eating, as the starters are so delicious that one is more or less full by the time the main meal comes... ;-) Don't be surprised if your food is not served hot. It is a Greek habit to serve food lukewarm, as people believe hot food is bad for the stomach. But some have adapted to the foreign habits and serve food hot like international customers like it.

Wine:

There are many delicious Greek wines, but it is not easy to choose the right one. Very expensive doesn't necessarily mean very good and vice versa. Often you can get lucky with homemade wines served from the barrel. If the restaurant offers "open wine", just ask if you can try it first,

restaurant owners will be happy to let you do so.

There are especially many light and tasty white wines. **Retsina** is very digestible, although some people don't like its rather 'special' taste (resin is added).

Fresh fruits/vegetables:

We can only recommend buying and eating fresh fruits and vegetables, as they are **very tasty**. Buy **Greek products** (ask) and you can't do anything wrong!

Especially delicious are: watermelons, honey melons, grapes, peaches, tomatoes & cabbage! Usually the little grocery stores and of course the farmers (who gather in the mornings in the centre of the towns and sell their stuff) offer local products.

How much money do you need?

Prices in restaurants are all very much the same on the same island, with slight differences of course. Calculate for an average meal for two approx. 11 - 21 Euro, depending on whether you drink wine and how expensive your main dish is! (Watch out, some fish is pretty expensive)

As a tip: It doesn't need to be a main dish every night, just stick with the delicious starters! Or share a main dish, since the portions are often huge anyway.

(Also see [Q&A "how much money do I need?"](#))

Breakfasting:

Finding a place that serves good breakfast is a matter of luck; there is no way of telling in advance whether it will be good. Best is to ask for recommendations. You can find all kinds of breakfast, from "Continental" to "English"...

Here are some *delicious* suggestions:

Starters and Snacks:	
Choriatiki (Salata)	tomato, cucumber, onions, olives, feta, olive oil
Lachano (Salata)	green cabbage, carrot, olive oil, lemon
Marouli (Salata)	lettuce salad with spring onions and fresh herbs
Horta	like spinach, boiled, with olive oil and lemon, served warm or cold, goes well with fish
Kolokithakia tiganita	slices of zucchini fried crispy
Melidsanes tiganites	slices of eggplant fried crispy
Piperies tiganites	whole "pepperoni" fried, not hot
Kolokithokioftedes	deep-fried zucchini burgers (mashed zucchini and feta)
Feta	fresh (usually sheep's) milk cheese
Tsatsiki	yoghurt with cucumber and garlic
Saganaki tiri	fried cheese (like feta) with lemon

Xynomysithra	soft and slightly sour, but mild white cheese
Tirokioftedes	deep-fried cheese balls (like Feta)
Dolmades	rice and mince-meat rolled in vine-leaves and boiled, with lemon sauce
Melidsanosalata	mashed eggplant salad
Skordalia	(garlic sauce) mashed potatoes with garlic
Saganaki garides	shrimps cooked in little pan with sauce
Patato-Salata	potato salad
Spanakopita	Spinach Pie (puff pastry)
Tiropita	Cheese Pie (puff pastry)
Giemista	with rice and (sometimes) minced meat stuffed tomatoes/ zucchini/ eggplant/ peppers/ pepperoni; good also as main dish; served hot or cold

Main Dishes	
Grilled fish	any kind of fish grilled, best chosen directly in kitchen in restaurant
Chtapodi psito	grilled Octopus
Kalamari	fresh fried Squid
Atherina	very small fish, fried crispy & eaten whole
Maridaki	different kind of small fish, also fried crispy
Bakaliaros	kind of sword fish, deep-fried, with garlic sauce
Grilled meat	any kind of meat grilled, Greeks' speciality
Souvlaki pita	any kind of grilled meat, with tomato, onion, plus optionally tsatsiki, mayonnaise etc., rolled in traditional bread (pita)
Pidakia	Lamb chops grilled
Youvetsi	Beef stew with kritharaki (rice-noodles) and red sauce
Moussaka	eggplant, minced meat, béchamel sauce in layers baked in the oven
Pastitsio	minced meat, noodles, béchamel sauce baked in the oven with cheese cover

Sweets/ Deserts	
Yoghurt with honey	natural 10% fat Greek yoghurt, with honey and optional with fresh fruit
Galaktoboureko	Milk pie, like semolina
Kataifi	traditional sweet with walnuts and honey
Baklavas	traditional sweet (puff pastry) with walnuts and honey
Tsoureki	sweet Easter buns
Loukoumades	(like doughnuts) dough deep-fried & served with honey and cinnamon



Greek Food with recipes and photos

Greek food is a wonderful mix of oriental and European dishes, cooked using different methods, from frying to broiling to boiling. Food in Greece is both easy to make, as the following recipes show, and delightful.

Much of Greek food is seasonal and a lot of it is prepared during different times of the year, mainly around dates of religious events, such as Easter, Christmas or New Year.

Greek food, uses much tomato paste in a liquid form. If you get a can of peeled tomatoes and mix them well, it will produce an appropriate paste.

In recent years, medical evidence has shown that eating a high quantity of tomatoes, results in lower cancer rates. Perhaps this is the reason why Greece as a country has low cancer rates. On the other hand, the incident rate of heart and stroke diseases increases every year.

In the recipes given below, some of the ingredients may not be available in your area, thus alternatives are given, trying to keep the original taste intact. However, this may not be possible, and no matter what a Greek restaurant in your area says, Greek food is *only Greek food* when prepared in Greece. I suppose this is true for Texas T-Bone steaks as for Greek food, right? Just one more reason why you should go there and experience it yourself!

The following are some of the easiest recipes that anyone can make and turn a dinner into a Greek treat. Kalv oreksi (Bon Apetit)!

An easy to make recipe for all!

RECIPE FOR ALL

Ingredients:

- ANY of the following, washed and sliced (or Diced): two courgettes OR 1 pound of beans (haricots) OR 1 pound of oca OR 1 pound of carrots OR 1 pound of Aubergines OR 1 pound Brussels Sprouts OR 1 pound of any vegetable like these (with internal substance not tomatoes or similar to them)
- Two onions, sliced
- One garlic clove, shredded
- 1/2 cup of olive oil
- Three large potatoes, sliced large pieces
- One large spoon of brown or white sugar
- Salt and pepper and oregano
- One can of peeled or shredded tomatoes
- One pound of water

Put the oil in a large saucepan and heat. Put the onion slices in to cook and turn them until they start turning brown. Add the garlic, salt, pepper and oregano. Place the potatoes, the sugar, and the water in the pan. Add the peeled tomatoes. Mix well. Let it boil for 10 minutes. Then add the first ingredient (any of the chosen vegetables). As it starts to cook, the water will slowly evaporate and then, about 30-40 minutes later, remove from fire. This way you can make any of the 'lathera' dishes of Greece; great healthy food!

TZAZIKI

Ingredients:



- 500 grams (1/2 quart) of Greek yoghurt (or natural full, dairy yoghurt)
- Three garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup of olive oil
- 1/2 sliced cucumber

Put the yoghurt in a bowl. Put the garlic through a garlic press and using the edge of a knife, spread the garlic coming out of the press on the yoghurt. Take the cucumber and peel the skin. Slice it thinly, either with a knife or using a salad slicer. Mix the ingredients with a mixer (or a fork) and slowly add the oil. The oil will be absorbed, and when it is done, the tzaziki is ready. Serve with a spoon and a few olives spread on the top. Tzaziki is eaten with plenty of french bread.

KAKAVIA SOUP (FISH SOUP)

Ingredients:

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available)

- About 1 kilo or two pounds of fish, half small, half large, any fish will do must be gutted and scaled(get the cheap ones!)
- 1 cup of olive oil
- Three sliced onions
- Three sliced tomatoes
- Salt and pepper

Put the smaller fish with enough water to cover them to boil. Add the olive oil, the sliced onions and the sliced tomatoes. After boiling them for about 1 hour, strain them through a strainer, making sure the meat of fish is well pressed. This is then returned to the heat and now you put the larger pieces of fish in it. Add water to cover. After about 1/2 hour, remove it from the fire, and slowly take out each large fish and remove the bones, head and fins. Return to the soup and serve hot.

CHICKEN SOUP

Ingredients:

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available)

- One whole chicken, about 1 kilo (2 pounds), must be cleaned first or purchase at a supermarket
- Three onions, sliced
- 1 cup of olive oil
- One cup of rice
- Salt and pepper

Put the chicken to boil, and after starting to boil, add the olive oil and the onions. Leave to boil for about an hour, by which time the chicken should be coming apart. Remove the froth periodically with a spoon. Remove the chicken and add the rice.

While the soup is boiling, remove all the chicken bones and re-add to the soup. Add salt and pepper. Serve when rice is ready, about 10 minutes.

MELITZANOSALATA / EGGPLANT SALAD

Ingredients:

- Four medium size eggplants/aubergines
- Three garlic cloves
- 1/2 cup of olive oil



Put the eggplants in the microwave or normal oven, and cook until it feels very soft (about 10 minutes in the microwave/40 minutes in a normal oven). Using a sharp knife, slice in half, and using a spoon, remove the inside 'meat' and place in a bowl. If the eggplants are well done, the inside should come out very easily. Put the garlic cloves in a garlic press and spread the garlic on top of the eggplant. Using a fork, start mixing the garlic and the eggplants together, and spread the oil a little at a time. When the oil is absorbed, the salad is done. Put in a fridge to cool down and serve with sprinkled parsley. Eggplant salad (also called poor man's caviar) is eaten with French bread.

HORIATIKI / GREEK SALAD

Ingredients:

- Four tomatoes, sliced in segments (must be hard, salad tomatoes)
- One sliced onion
- 1/2 sliced cucumber
- Some olive oil
- Sliced feta cheese (a white, salty cheese made with goats milk)
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning



Mix the ingredients together and spread the oil over them. Sprinkle some salt, pepper and oregano.

MAIN COURSES

CHEESE PIES / TYROPITA

Ingredients:

- 1/2 kilo / 1 pound of Feta cheese, either whole or in pieces
- Four tablespoons butter or margarine
- 6 eggs (or 3 eggs)
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- Pastry called Filo composed of very thin pastry sheets (can be found at specialist delis in North America or Frozen in Europe)
- 3 cups of white bechamel sauce (optional)
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg



Looks like this one

This dish can be done in triangle sized chunks. After you butter the fillo and you put the filling in it, fold it in single triangles and place them on the oven dish.

Crush the Feta to a paste, add the bechamel sauce, and the eggs, while stirring well. Add the salt, pepper and nutmeg. Line the baking pan with oil, and then place about 6-10 sheets of fillo, buttering them on each side. Pour the batter and flatten with a spatula. Then continue with the rest of the fillo sheets (should be about 20-25 in a package). Trim the edges and with a sharp knife, outline the serving squares on the top sheet (you dont have to actually cut them, just press the knife on the top surface to mark them - they should be about 2 inch squares (5 cm). Bake in a moderate oven for about 30 minutes, or until the top sheet is dark brown. Now cut the squares you marked earlier and serve, after letting it cool a little.

FRIKASSEE OF LAMB

Ingredients:

- Two large KOS LETTUCE or HARD lettuces
- Six lamb chops
- Some olive oil
- Fresh dill
- Four eggs
- Juice from two lemons
- Two sliced onions



Put the oil in a pot and cook the onion slices until soft. Put the salted lamb chops in the hot oil, and brown both sides. Clean the lettuce leafs with water and without removing all the water from them, place them over the lamb chops. Add the fresh dill, cover, and let cook turning the lamb chops over (medium/high setting). When the lettuce is cooked (should be very soft and look wilted) and the lamb chops feel very soft (about 30-40 minutes), remove from the fire and let cool for about 5 minutes. In the meantime, mix the eggs using a mixer and slowly add

the lemon juice. Using a ladle, pick up some of the juice from the pot and add to the eggs/lemon mixture while the mixer is continually beating them. Keep on adding the juice until most of it is in the egg mixture (which by this time should be the same temperature as the pot). Empty the egg mixture into the pot and using a big wooden spoon, mix them vigorously to avoid curdling.

OKRA

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo (2 pounds) okra - also called ladies fingers - in a can form is OK
 - 1/2 cup vinegar
 - 1 cup of olive oil
 - 2 teaspoons chopped parsley
 - 2 chopped onions
 - 1 can of pulped tomatoes
 - 1 teaspoon sugar
 - Salt and pepper
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Remove the stems from Okra (if fresh). Wash, drain them and place on a dish. Sprinkle salt, vinegar and pepper. Put this to the side while you prepare the rest. Fry the onions in the olive oil till brown, add the tomatoes, sugar, parsley, salt and pepper. Simmer until the tomatoes are dissolved fully. Add the okra to the mixture, add some more water, and boil for about 30 minutes, adding water.

SPINACH PIE/SPANAKOPITA

Ingredients:

- One pack of very thin 'fvlo' pastry (obtained from a specialist deli)
- 1 Kg / 2 lb of spinach, either frozen or fresh
- 1 kg / 2 lb of feta cheese
- 250g / 1/2lb of butter or margarine
- 2 cloves of garlic or garlic powder



If the spinach is raw, cook and slice thinly. If frozen, defrost. In either case, mix the feta cheese with the spinach to make a mixture, adding the chopped garlic. Spread some butter on an oven tray. Open the fvlo package and place each thin pastry (it is as thin as paper) on the tray, buttering each one using a brush. After you have done 8 fvlo slices, place the spinach/feta mixture and spread over the entire oven tray, covering the 8 pastry slices. On top of this, place the remaining pastry slices, buttering each one of them as well. Notch the last one creating 2 inch (5 cm) on a side, squares. Place in a medium heat oven and cook till brown.

KEFTEDES / MEATBALLS



Ingredients:

- 1lb / 1/2kg of ground beef
- One chopped onion
- 1 egg
- Some olive oil
- Some chopped mint leaves
- Some flour
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning

Mix the meat with the mint, the egg and the onion. Season with oregano, salt and pepper. Form into egg size balls. Heat the oil. Roll the meatballs in flour and place in the hot oil. When turning brown, turn, cook other side and serve hot.

MOUSAKA

Ingredients:

- 1 kilo / 2 pounds potatoes
- 1/2 kilo ground beef
- 1/2 chopped onion
- 1 cup tomatoes from a can
- 1/2 glass white or red wine
- 1 cup of olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- Salt, pepper and nutmeg

For the topping:

- (No image available)
- 1 liter milk/2 pints
 - 1 cup flour
 - 1/2 cup of butter
 - 2 eggs
 - Grated cheese (Emmenthal OK)

For just plain old Mousaka, remove the potatoes, however it is normally served with them.

Boil the potatoes and stop half way. Peel them and let aside. Fry the onion in the oil till brown, add the ground beef, wait 10 minutes while stirring, and add the wine, tomatoe, parsley, salt, pepper and about a tablespoon of sugar, and then add 1/2 cup of water. When the water is absorbed, remove from heat, and add the grated cheese and the egg yolks (keeping the egg whites for the topping. In a saucepan bring three cups of milk to boil, mix the flour with the remaining cup and pour stirring constantly, making a thick paste - if too thick, add milk, if too thin, add some more flour. Remove from heat, and add the egg yolks, egg whites and the nutmeg. Butter a baking pan, and put the sliced potatoes in it. Cover with the meat mixture and then cover with the contents of the saucepan. When the topping turns brown, serve cool.

GIOUVETSI / LAMB STEW IN CLAY POTS

Ingredients:



- 1 kg of lamb(chops/neck, whatever)
- Three sliced onions
- 1 litre/1 quart of tomato puree or tomato paste for cooking
- Some olive oil
- 1kg/2lb of 'rice' pasta available in Italian or Greek delicatessens (called Kritharaki)
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning

In a clay pot (or heavy cast iron pot), put the oil and let heat in an oven at high setting. Add the sliced onions and brown. Sprinkle the lamb with salt and pepper and place in the pot to brown the sides. When the lamb starts cooking, place the tomato over it and add the same amount of water. Let it heat for about 1 hour until the lamb feels soft and much of the water has evaporated (add water if needed). Remove from the oven, and put the 1 kg of 'rice' pasta. When the pasta is cooked (another 10 minutes), remove and serve hot.

CHICKEN WITH TOMATO AND FRIES

Ingredients:



- One medium size chicken (1kg/2lb)
- One sliced onion
- 1 litre/1 quart liquid tomato paste
- 1/2 cup of olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Two spoons of sugar
- One can of cooked okra beans

Heat the oil in a big pot (medium-high setting). Place the cleaned chicken in the pot and turn, to brown all the sides evenly. Add the tomato juice and add the same amount of water, plus the sugar. Let it boil for an hour, until the chicken is starting to come apart. The water would have evaporated by now, leaving a thick red sauce. Add okra if desired. Serve with fries/chips.

FRIED
AUBERGINES/EGGPLANTS

Ingredients:

- Four eggplants/aubergines
- Two eggs, beaten
- Some cooking oil

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Clean the eggplants and slice them, in 1/16 inch (3mm) slices. Put the oil in a skillet and heat. Take an eggplant slice at a time and cover it with the egg mixture. Place onto the skillet and cook for a minute or so. Turn and cook other side. Repeat until all of the slices are done. Serve with Tzaziki.

TASKEBAP / STEWED MEAT



Ingredients:

- 1 kg / 2 lb meat in squares
- One sliced onion
- 1 litre/1 quart of liquid tomato paste for cooking
- Two spoons of sugar
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning

Chop the onion and brown in a pot with the oil. Add the meat and brown the sides. Sprinkle salt and pepper. Add the sugar, cover with the tomato juice and add the same amount of water. Let cook for an hour or more until the meat is soft (in a pressure cooker it takes 20 minutes). Serve with rice or fries/chips.

SOUTZOUKAKIA



Ingredients:

- 1 kg/2 lb ground beef
- 2 eggs
- 1 sliced onion
- 1 litre/1 quart of liquid tomato paste
- Some olive oil
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning
- Cumin seasoning
- Some flour
- 2 spoons of sugar

Mix the meat with the eggs, and add the chopped onion, the cumin, salt and pepper. Form into elongated balls and turn inside a bowl with the flour. Fry the floured meatballs in the oil at high heat. When cooked add the tomato paste and sugar, and let cook for another 10-15 minutes at medium heat. Serve with either rice or fries/chips.

SOUVLAKI



Ingredients:

- 1 kg/2 lb of pork meat, cut in cubes with 1 inch (2.5cm) sides
- 6 Pita breads
- Juice of 4 lemons
- Salt, pepper and oregano seasoning
- 6 wooden skewers
- Tzaziki (see above)

Put the pork meat in the wooden skewers, salt and pepper them. Cook over a barbecue fire, on a skillet or under an oven grill. In the meantime, spread some oil on the pitas and place under the oven grill, browning slightly each side, but not drying them. When the meat is done,

dip them in a long glass containing the lemon juice and then holding a pita bread in one hand empty the skewer contents in it removing the skewer. Sprinkle with oregano and salt, add tzaziki and the souvlaki is ready.

MEATBALLS AVGOLEMONO (with egg and lemon sauce)



Ingredients:

- 500grams / 1 lb of ground beef
 - 250grams / 1/2 lb butter or margarine
 - 125grams / 1/4 lb rice
 - 1 egg
 - 1 onion, finely chopped, parsley, salt, pepper
- For the sauce
- 2 eggs
 - 2 lemons

Mix all the ingredients together, and mould into round 1 inch / 2.5cm balls. Put some water in a pot, place the butter and balls in it carefully. Let them cook for about 20 minutes and then let cool. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs with a mixer and slowly, while beating, add the lemon juice ensuring that the sauce doesn't curdle. With a ladle, take some of the juice from the meatball pot, add to the sauce, all the time mixing. Keep doing this until all the juice has been mixed in the sauce. Empty all the sauce on top of the meatballs and serve with some sprinkled parsley.

Deserts

GALAKTOBOUREKO (MILK SWEET) (ALSO BAKLAVA)- low cal - low cholesterol



Ingredients:

- 500 grams (1 lb) semolina (a type of yellow flour)
 - 1 litre / 1 quart milk
 - 1 package of 'filo' paper-thin pastry
 - 250 grams melted butter
 - 2 packages of vanilla essence
- For the surup:
- 500 grams / 1 lb of sugar
 - Peel of one orange, grated
 - 1 litre / 1 quart of water

FOR Baklava replace the milk-semolina mixture below with a mixture of walnuts, honey and cinnamon.

Using a brush coat an oven tray with melted butter. Add each one of the filo pastry sheets, one on top of another, until you have coated 8 of them, and put them on the tray. In the meantime, empty the milk in a big pot, add the semolina and vanilla, and bring to boil, all the time vigorously stirring with a wooden spoon. The mix should be like a thick surup (like a fruit jam - must

not be too thick). Remove from the fire and leave aside to cool for 5 minutes. Empty the semolina mix onto the oven tray and spread it around so that the entire tray is filled. Continue adding the remaining of the pastry sheets, buttering each one of them until you have added them all. Using a sharp knife, notch squares, about 5 cm per side (2 inches). Put in the oven and cook until brown. Remove and let cool. In the meantime, place the sugar in a pot, add the water, the second vanilla essence and the grated orange peel. Bring to boil and let cool. Pour the surup over the semolina mix and place in fridge. This is a delicious desert and well worth the effort. Must be kept in the fridge as it contains milk.

RIZOGALO (RICE MILK SWEET)

Ingredients:

- 3/4cup of rice
- 1 litre / 1 quart milk
- 1 rind of a lemon
- 10 tablespoons of sugar
- Cinnamon powder

Put the rice in a large pot, add water and boil till very soft (should be fluffy and thick). The water should have almost evaporated. Add the milk, the lemon rind and the sugar. Let boil at a setting which would not let the milk overflow. When it thickens, remove from stove. Pour in individual bowls and let cool. Sprinkle cinnamon and serve.

<http://www.ellada.com/grarr15.html>