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LOOKING BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: THE MEDITERRANEAN AND PLANETARY HEALTH

“The COVID-19 pandemic, sadly, has laid bare the poor health of too many around the world. The ‘underlying condition’—the chronic diseases from obesity and diabetes to heart disease and many cancers—correctly cited as heightened coronavirus risk factors for causing severe, life-threatening infections and higher death rates are closely tied to unhealthy diets and lifestyle choices. More broadly, these are the same unhealthy food choices that, in the aggregate, undermine our health everywhere. So like most, we switched to the virtual conference. In 2019, it took place in Barcelona, as it would have again in 2020 if not for the matter of a global pandemic that has only highlighted the broader urgency we need to bring to improving public health everywhere. So like most, we switched to the virtual world, with an online conference on November 16, 2020 (you can watch the recording here) and this digital magazine.

The questions that drive this virtual edition of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean are inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the designation by UNESCO of the Mediterranean Diet as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. How can we significantly increase the presence of the heart of the traditional Mediterranean Diet—principally, fruits and vegetables, whole grains, olive oil, legumes, nuts and seeds—on the menus of restaurants and foodservice operations across the Mediterranean and worldwide? And how can we inspire next-generation culinary strategy, food product innovation, and consumer engagement building on the genius of the centuries-old food cultures of the Mediterranean basin?

In a time of uncertainty, when food professionals need to worry not just about food safety but the safety of their customers more generally, and when public health imperatives are ever greater because of COVID-19 concerns, when our industry has been decimated by closures and limited business models, and when supply chain strains are so acute, providing healthy, sustainable, and delicious menus has taken on a new urgency. And if prioritizing health, wellness, and equity are more critical than ever, it is equally vital that as scientists and scholars, chefs and culinary experts, and food business and government leaders, we reach beyond our professional comfort zones and commit to a level of engagement and collaboration sufficient to drive needed food system transformation.

To address these health and planetary imperatives, Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean 2020 focuses on the culinary and business operationalization of the Mediterranean Diet, from dishes and menus to new financial models and strategies around behavioral change. In the online conference recording and in the pages that follow, you’ll learn about the innovative strategies acclaimed chefs, culinary experts, business owners, and foodservice operators have used in their kitchens to advance plant-forward cooking with clear takeaways to ensure you’ll be able to develop similar, successful paths in your own companies and organizations.

The Mediterranean Diet regularly tops global lists of best diets. How TMC translates its principles into action with Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean is only one example of our work. We also design custom programs, including research studies, courses long and short, training for employees or customers, and editorial material. Together, we can advance the health, sustainability, and flavor principles of the Mediterranean Diet around the world. Contact us to learn how we can put our expertise to work for you.

As you read and react to these pages, we invite you to share your own successes, learnings, case studies, recipes, and more with us at reach out at hel@tomorrowtastesmediterranean.org. In addition, Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean 2020 will focus on biodiversity in the Mediterranean, so please share your work or that of associated organizations, companies, and colleagues with us so that we can highlight it in this next edition.

With my best wishes,

Anne E. McBride, PhD
Deputy Director, Torribera Mediterranean Centre
THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: 10 YEARS ON

by Antonia Trichopoulou
The traditional Mediterranean Diet is defined as the diet prevailing in the olive tree-growing areas of the Mediterranean region up to the early 1960s. It is characterised by the high intake of vegetables, fruits, legumes, and cereals (mainly in unprocessed forms), the low intake of meat and meat products and low to moderate intake of dairy products, the moderate to high intake of fish, the high intake of unsaturated added lipids, particularly in the form of olive oil, and the modest intake of ethanol, mainly as wine during meals, if it is accepted by religious and social norms. The Mediterranean Diet was acknowledged by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage in 2010. The designation encompassed a set of skills, knowledge, practices, and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation and, particularly, consumption of food. And the bit I like and think we are most at risk of forgetting: “The Mediterranean Diet is harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation and, particularly, consumption of food. And the bit I like and think we are most at risk of forgetting: “The Mediterranean Diet is an intangible cultural heritage in 2010. The designation encompassed a set of skills, knowledge, practices, and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation and, particularly, consumption of food.”

The term “cultural heritage” does not end at monuments and collections of masterful objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.

Taking our newfound responsibility seriously, over the last 10 years has seen an emphasis on safeguarding the intangible heritage of the Mediterranean Diet. Important activities have taken center stage with the understanding that a “true education” through training food producers, mass caterers, industry as well as faculty, students, and interested individuals, can work to preserve the Mediterranean Diet and avoid possible erosions that may affect it at a national, regional and local level.

Having had the importance of preserving our heritage recognized, the importance of further research was also acknowledged. With funded research opportunities being made available, we have further robust epidemiological data that are concordant in suggesting that the Mediterranean Diet decreases the risks for a variety of diseases. In other words, we have consistent epidemiological evidence of the beneficial effects of the Mediterranean Diet.

Collectively, these studies have indicated convincing inverse associations with overall mortality and with the incidence of coronary heart disease and thrombotic stroke, compelling inverse associations with the incidence of cancer (overall including, possibly, the incidence of breast and colorectal cancer), likely inverse association with the incidence of adult-onset diabetes mellitus and possibly with the incidence of hip fractures. There have also been randomized trials supporting the beneficial role of the Mediterranean Diet on the incidence of cardiovascular events and of survival from coronary heart disease.

It is of interest that as of November 16, 2020, 13,001 peer-reviewed publications refer to the Mediterranean Diet, with only 3,592 of those published before 2010, marking a significant increase of 9,409 publications over the last 10 years.

The implications of this research guide our future studies and they may follow or improve and enrich, our approach to disentangle the health effects of the components of the Mediterranean Diet and of their mutual interactions. They could also focus on the identification of the key compounds in this diet or biochemical or molecular mediators of the Mediterranean Diet’s beneficial health effects.

From a health perspective, in the last decade, nutritional investigations have provided strong indications that a diet that adheres to the principles of the traditional Mediterranean Diet is associated with longer survival. Again, this could be partly attributed to Mediterranean traditional foods, which are critical components of this diet.

Traditional foods are footprints of the past in the contemporary life of many population groups. Traditional foods reflect cultural inheritance and impose their imprints on the respective dietary patterns.

The traditional Mediterranean Diet is the heritage of thousands of years of human interaction around the Mediterranean Sea. Yet in just this last decade, the significance of the Mediterranean Diet has evolved from being a registered healthy dietary pattern to, by definition, encompassing a sustainable dietary pattern—with low environmental impacts for present and future generations in which nutrition, food, cultures, people, environment, and sustainability all interact with each other.

This article is excerpted from a presentation given by Dr. Antonia Trichopoulou at the 2020 meeting of the Italian Society of Human Nutrition/Federation of the European Societies of Nutrition. Antonia Trichopoulou, MD, PhD, is president of the Hellenic Health Foundation and Professor Emeritus at the University of Athens School of Medicine. She has served as president of the Federation of the European Nutrition Societies (FENS) and as chairperson or key member of numerous Greek and European Commission and World Health Organization Committees, and is a member of the TMC Scientific and Technical Advisory Council.
We recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Mediterranean Diet receiving the UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage designation. As we pondered this important moment, we decided to ask members of our Torribera Mediterranean Center advisory councils—including scientists and culinary authorities—what they think the next 10 years hold, for Mediterranean Diet research and adoption by chefs, foodservice operators, and consumers. Their answers appear below, lightly edited for clarity when needed.

A few key elements appear in numerous answers. The Mediterranean Diet comes with a sense of place, culture, and history; are those constraints or opportunities? An important obstacle to broader adoption of the Mediterranean Diet is the higher cost—or, at times, higher perceived cost—of some of its core components, at least in the context of how many food systems factor direct and indirect costs. How do we create a system that includes producers, chefs, and consumers to eliminate that obstacle? And while much is known about the Mediterranean Diet, pathways for groundbreaking research are innumerable, whether they cover health, sustainability, or sociological perspectives.
What do we know about the Mediterranean Diet?

**Ramón Echávarri (RE):** The Mediterranean Diet is one of the healthiest dietary patterns that has proved its protective effects on health with the highest level of scientific evidence.

**Juan Rosa (JR):** La dieta mediterránea es un típico del territorio, característico de los territórios contiguos al mar Mediterráneo. Más que una pauta nutricional saludable, es un rasgo heredado de las antiguas civilizaciones mediterráneas, que ha acabado fomentar esta dieta, un estilo de vida equilibrado. Las características del clima que componen este territorio mediterráneo, favorecen la producción de una gran diversidad de alimentos de calidad, frescos y de temporada, que enriquecen sus propietarios bienacostumbrados con la dieta mediterránea.

The Mediterranean Diet is a type of food characteristics of the territories adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea. More than a nutritional pattern, it becomes a valuable legacy of the ancient Mediterranean civilizations, which has ended up making this diet a balanced lifestyle. The characteristics and climate that make up this Mediterranean territory favor the production of a wide variety of quality, fresh and seasonal foods, which enrich the beneficial properties provided by the Mediterranean Diet.

**Sima Gonen (SG):** The Mediterranean Diet mostly consists of plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, cereals, nuts and olive oil, as well as fish and seafood, a little use of processed, cooked, and deep-fried foods, eggs, poultry and a low use of red meat. The “sustainability” of the Mediterranean Diet is one of the reasons it is a very important dietary pattern for current and future generations. The Mediterranean Diet is considered to be a key to longer and healthier life.

**Barcelona Culinary Hub (BCH):** The Mediterranean Diet is a valuable cultural heritage, not just a simple, rich and healthy nutritional guideline. It is all about a well-balanced way of life that includes food, recipes, cooking methods, celebrations, traditions and many human activities. It also involves the way food is chosen, produced, processed, distributed, and consumed. For this reason, the Mediterranean Diet was recognized by the UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010.

**Antonia Trichopoulou (AT):** Consistent epidemiological evidence supports the beneficial effects of the Mediterranean Diet.

**Teresa Gómez (TG):** Es un hecho que los países Mediterráneos tienen un menor incidencia de enfermedades cardiovascular. Y se ha demostrado que la Dieta Mediterránea es la responsable de este fenómeno.

**What don’t we know yet?**

**RE:** We should study more its protective effects beyond cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular risk factors, such as with respect to cancer prevention.

**SR:** Sabemos que los países mediterráneos están más atentos a cuidar el sector primario. Nos faltan más datos sobre el efecto de la dieta mediterránea, el que pasa es que no sé si somos conscientes de que hem de prestar más atención y cuidar del sector primario.

**What needs to be the focus of the research for the next 10 years?**

**RE:** To improve the positive effects of the traditional Mediterranean Diet, possibly by adding foods from other parts of the world, such as cocoa or soy. To improve the culinary techniques, in order to enhance the health effects of the culinary foods and increase the absorption of its nutrients.

**SR:** Claramente, lo que no sabemos todavía es conseguir adaptar la Dieta Mediterránea a la mayoría de las culturas. Hay mucho trabajo por delante para concretarlo.

**AT:** Surely, what we still do not know is how to adapt the Mediterranean Diet to most cultures. There is much work ahead to achieve it.

**What needs to be the focus of the research for the next 10 years?**

**AT:** The mechanism(s) underlying these effects.

**TG:** We don’t know from the general health statistics in the Mediterranean that the outlook is pretty good for anyone who follows the diet through a lifetime, but we don’t know yet the impact it might have on Alzheimer’s, autoimmune diseases, ADHD, etc. There’s still a huge amount of potential benefits to be discovered.

**ML:** We still don’t know for sure which of its ingredients is most beneficial, or if all the “basket” of items that together living the greatest health benefits, with the emphasis on olive oil. For example, by cooking vegetables in olive oil, the absorption rate in our bodies of the nutrients present in these vegetables increases. We also know that other lifestyle factors in the Mediterranean also correlate with longevity and well-being, such as spending lots of time outdoors, a lifestyle that is still lower-paced than that of many other places, and an emphasis on community and social interactions. We don’t know how all of these factors interact with diet, and we don’t know the extent to which diet and these other factors can be separated from one another. This is why my emphasis is both on good food, but also on a healthy overall lifestyle and world-view.

**SG:** Seguramente, lo que no sabemos todavía es conseguir adaptar la Dieta Mediterránea a la mayoría de las culturas. Hay mucho trabajo por delante para concretarlo.

**What needs to be the focus of the research for the next 10 years?**

**AT:** Traditional Mediterranean foods, omics, telomeres.

**Diane Kochilas (DK):** The culinary effects of the Mediterranean Diet in relation to all of the above, but especially in terms of immunity. One would be two areas of research I’d love to see more of. In my opinion, the connection between the Mediterranean Diet and physical, emotional and planetary health needs to be quantified more fully. One of the things that I’ve been reading about during this pandemic is the connection between the first major COVID-19 outbreaks and pollution; and one of the things that I was really surprised me is how little open discussion there’s been about the connection of diet to overall immunity. Obesity is one of the major underlying health issues that has helped COVID take such a strong foothold in the US.

**TG:** Looking not at just longevity, but at how it can act as a preventative to other health problems later in life.

**ML:** The health benefits of the micro-nutrients of olive oil, and how different lifestyle factors interact with and support one another in combination with those micronutrients—a healthy Mediterranean Diet underpins other healthy research should focus on finding ways to make sustainable, economically and environmentally speaking, the production of fresh produce, enhancing biodiversity and polyculture around large cities, avoiding unnecessary transport of goods and being able to create spaces of cultivation with enough diversity to be able to supply fresh produce to the cities. Therefore, we need to work in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, and fishing to provide sustained and healthy diets that are sustainable. Meat will be consumed less because of its high costs. Vertical and urban farming practices will be increased in big cities. Disease preventive and curative foods will come to the fore. People will be more interested in where and under what conditions the product was produced. The most important problem will be obesity, a healthy and balanced diet will become even more important.

**BCH:** One of the biggest challenges for the following years is to carry out and establish new global eating patterns by introducing healthy and sustainable diets all over the world. Therefore, culinary professionals need to receive nutritional training for their development; locally, it would be necessary to improve the number of sustainable farming operations, as well as supporting and promoting farming among the younger population; and embrace a better adhesion of the Mediterranean Diet. Another interesting field of study is the Mediterranean Diet effect on the prevention of diabetes or cardiovascular diseases, among others.
How can we communicate better the Mediterranean Diet's emphasis on flavor, sustainability, and health?

**JT:** Sent capaços de transmetre a les famílies les ganes de cuinar, és quelcom que estem perdent i penso que és molt important recuperar. Hem de convertir en complíx d'aquesta forma de menjar a les famílies. La forma de viure de la Terra mediterrània té molt a veure amb la cultura gastronòmica popular, cuinar en família, menjar en família, dedicar temps a la taula. Cal transmitir que més estil del sabor, i afrontant la sostentibilitat, hem de cuidar la nostra salut menjant-sa però també hem de cuidar la nostra salut emocional.

**CH:**我要把这些厨师找到的食材和烹饪方法原原本本地带到菜场里。瑞士土生土长的厨师西里尔·克莱恩对地中海饮食的推广充满热情，他鼓励人们到市场和街边小摊上品尝新鲜的食材，而不是只在高级餐厅里享受美食。他认为，地中海饮食不仅仅是关于健康，更是一种生活方式。

**SG:** Many widely distributed, traditional restaurant recipes emphasize foods with an animal origin, including sauce making. If we take France, for instance, much of the food culture and many restaurant traditions are built on animal products and fats. Considering that French cuisine has influenced different cuisines for many years, most restaurants are influenced by this highly greasy and [animal-sourced] sauce-based cuisine. When we evaluate in terms of earnings, the menus with animal products are more expensive. There is also a problem in accessing natural ingredients, especially herbs, grown in their natural areas.

**BCH:** Principally, the cost of fresh and locally produced food that fulfills the Mediterranean Diet standards. On the other hand, a lack of awareness in using foods, such as vegetables, in a variety of preparations that make them more appealing for the consumer. In fact, a large number of people do not ask for vegetable-based dishes when it comes to dining out.

**AT:** The high price of seasonal, sustainable vegetables and fruits. Lack of expertise in cooking the Mediterranean way. Different dietary habits (e.g., high meat consumption).

**DK:** Food cost and a lingering, entrenched belief that vegetables do not a main course make are some of the obstacles that keep the Mediterranean Diet at bay on restaurant menus, ironically in the Mediterranean itself, as well! I also think that the restaurant experience (pre-COVID anyways) has traditionally been about indulgence. Few of us really want to think about “health” when we go out for a meal; it’s more about enjoyment. Maybe there needs to be a concerted global effort aimed at teaching chefs to work with and make plant-based foods sexy, and an equally great effort at writing up healthy menus options so that the indulgence factor is there.

**TS:** Many people, even in the Mediterranean itself, are turned off by a meal centered around pulses or vegetables (I was in Seville recently for several days, and during that time, was served a simple tomato just once). Morocco tends to overcook vegetables though they are widely eaten, and the north of Spain seems towards needing protein meat (or faba) to consider the meal worth of restaurant status. So, there’s still a lot of work to be done to make people choose it. It’s this way of educating the Mediterranean itself, then we have even further to go in, say, the UK or USA.

**ML:** There are practical obstacles, and then there are obstacles that stem from misconceptions and social biases. Both can be overcome. People incorrectly think that eating fresh, organic food is more expensive than eating packaged or processed foods—it isn’t. The Mediterranean Diet’s plant-forward recipes are so versatile, and offer great flavor combinations, and the use of olive oil fits with all culinary and dietary trends. Many chefs think that preparing Mediterranean cuisine is more difficult—it isn’t, but it is a matter of educating both chefs and consumers that healthy, Mediterranean eating isn’t something only for wealthy people. In fact, the people who first invented it were peasants!

**JR:** The way of life in the Mediterranean region has a lot to do with popular gastronomic culture, cooking with the family, eating with the family, spending time at the table. It must be conveyed that beyond taste, and promoting sustainability, we must take care of our health by eating healthy but we must also take care of our emotional health.

**CH:** Giving priority to specific training on the Mediterranean Diet in a theoretical and very practical way, so that people can visualize the implementation in their area. Barcelona Culinary Hub believes and promotes healthy training, and is now working on an intensive three-month course on the application of healthful diets in restaurants led by chef Xavier Pellou, who owns a vegetable-based restaurant in Barcelona, acknowledged as Best Vegetable Restaurant in the World 2018.

**AT:** Improve cooking skills at the family level. Integrate sustainability with recreation activities at the school level.

**DK:** Get someone like Kim Kardashian and other uber-high-profile public figures to tout this way of eating as the best way for a healthy mind, body and planet. I know that might make some people cringe... We need a GOOP for the Mediterranean Diet!

**TS:** People need to see these products and ingredients “as” “way” “We need to do for the pulses, and vegetables, and grains what we did for jamón ibérico and olive oil. Media will play a large part, scientific and medical research needs to be presented in more accessible ways, and cooking schools aimed at the general public rather than professionals need to make education around the products and ingredients part of their curriculum, not just the cooking of the ingredients themselves. Chefs have a responsibility to train their teams, not just to cook and serve food, but to understand why they are cooking and serving this particular food and the benefits it has. This should reflect in staff meals. Basically, the trickle-down approach. The bottom line is most people are not reading specialist journals, so the communication needs to be more far reaching so it’s easy to make the choice for a Mediterranean Diet

**ML:** First and foremost, all stakeholders need to increase their communication efforts to popularize the Mediterranean Diet further. We need to make
What can we expect in 2021 when it comes to Mediterranean Menus around the world?

**FR:** Seguir la dieta mediterránea no vol dir que s’agafa de fer un ús estricte de productes de l’àrea del Mediterrani, sinó que també es vuelveu en com es fa si dels productes d’una manera saludable i equilibrada, que a la fi el que es pretén sigui aquesta dieta. Així doncs, esperem que els menús mediterranis d’arreu del món al 2021 siguin sobretot saludables i sostenibles, utilitzant els productes frescos, de possumit ir i de temporada de cada país.

**ML:** As people become more aware of the quality of the food they eat, they are making better choices, with an emphasis on traditional foods, prepared with a contemporary twist. People are also seeking out “comfort foods” that have significant nutritional value due to the tremendous need for comfort AND immune-boosting properties amidst what the world is going through with the COVID pandemic.

**SG:** Balanced and healthy menus with product freshness and refined flavors.

**BCH:** The globalization would add value to the Mediterranean Diet export countries like France, Italy, Greece, and Spain and it may be possible to apply modifications to customize its implementation in each area. An example would be that known as “The Second Mediterranean Diet” in Japan, based on fish and rice. We hope “Mediterranean Diet” does not become the new fast-food trend and its value really does transform the way we eat and live in a sustainable way.

**TF:** I think it will continue to grow, especially because it is so varied. Restaurants are becoming more plant-forward and better at celebrating the simplicity of a perfect product, without messing around with it too much. I think we’ll see less well-known cuisines represented as part of a celebration of this innate diversity: alongside the French, Italian and Mediterranean area. An example would be that known as “The Second Mediterranean Diet” in Japan, based on fish and rice. We hope “Mediterranean Diet” does not become the new fast-food trend and its value really does transform the way we eat and live in a sustainable way.

**AT:** Their number will increase.

**TG:** Tenemos que soñar que 2021 será un año mucho mejor, en todos los sentidos. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y la nutrición de uno. En este sentido, más concienciado sobre qué es la importancia de lo que es la salud. Y creo que el mundo estará más concienciado sobre lo importante que es la salud y

**TS:** The food trend and its value really does transform the way we eat and live in a sustainable way.
What do you expect export trends to be like? 

SG: The agri-food sector will be the first big exports market for the Mediterranean countries. Natural and drug-free agriculture will be a priority. BCH: Digitalization is the biggest global transformation, therefore, telecommunications is now one of the most important exportation trends. Nevertheless, countries like Spain are still one of the biggest vegetable and fruit importers to other European countries like Germany or UK.

DK: I can only judge from my nascent e-shop, which specializes in Greek products. People seem to want natural products with great flavor, tied to a particular place, produced by real people, with a story behind them, and products that are unique but not excessively obscure. Name recognition, i.e. Sanottie, helps a lot.

I do wonder if convenience products like the Mediterranean Diet might also become a trend. TS: Mainly olive oil, wine, fruit and vegetables, but there’s growing interest in specialist pulses like the garrafón beans used in traditional paellas of Valencia and even survival—this pandemic has some important lessons to teach us on that front.

TG: El mundo será un poco mejor, seguro!

There will be a little better, for sure! So many foot [all, of course] will be willing to adapt new customs that help a more sustainable world.

JP: The weak links in supply chains and in the food system have become visible to everybody, also to citizens who otherwise wouldn’t be particularly interested in food policy or other food issues. The centrality of food will increase as more people lose their jobs and will need support to put food on their tables. This could be an opportunity to make some changes in the food system for instance, increasing redundancies in supply chains, even if it means to lower their efficiency in terms of prices and distribution.

More people could possibly be interested in learning more about how to eat a healthy diet at affordable prices. Also, if more citizens become concerned about food, there could be more political pressure on the food industry to improve its methods towards greater sustainability and its labor policies toward greater justice (think about vegetable and fruit pickers in the Mediterranean area).

About the Panelists

Ramón Llull, MD, PhD, is senior consultant of the Internal Medicine Department at the Hospital Clinic in Barcelona, associate professor in the School of Medicine at University of Barcelona, member of the Institute of Health Board of Directors in Spain, and member of the advisory board of the European Foundation for Alcohol Research (EFAR). His research group designed and conducted the ambitious Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease with a Mediterranean Diet (PREMED1) study, published in 2013, for which Ramón was the lead author. He is the chair of the TMC’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Council.

Teresa Gutiérrez is chef-owner of Azafrán in Spain’s La Mancha region, which currently holds a Michelin Bité Gourmand and a Sól Repol. Having studied health and nutrition, she gives great importance to the union of cooking savvy meals and maintaining the raw properties of the food to create a well-balanced diet. In 2019, she received the National Gastronomy Award by JRE Spain. She is an ambassador of Protected Designation Origin La Mancha Saffron and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.

Sorina Giezen is the founder of The Kitchen Project and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council. She is also the Instituto representative for Delice Network - Network of the Good Food Cities of the World and Mediterra, to share and promote the culinary heritage of the Mediterranean countries.

Diana Koniakowska is the host of My Greek Table on PBS and the award-winning author of many books on Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, including Flavie Lessons on Food, Life & Longevity from the Greek Island Where People Forget to Die. She runs the Delicious Greek Cooking School in Haria and is a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.

Maria Loi is chef-owner of Loi Estiatorio in New York. A businesswoman, artist, cultural personality, and philanthropist, Maria’s latest partnership with Dr. Stéfanos Kales of Harvard University’s School of Public Health aims to educate America and the rest of the world through television and various media initiatives about the powerful health benefits of the Greek diet, the foundation of the Mediterranean Diet. She is a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.

Fabio Patanénsi, PhD, is professor of food studies at New York University. His research explores the interactions among food, popular culture, and politics, particularly in food design. A native of Italy, he wrote for many years as US correspondent for Gambero Rosso, Italy’s authoritative food and wine magazine, and is a prolific food author, including A l’Italia. A History of Food in Italy.

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Zena Sericous is the executive chef of El Peno in Maribach, founder of Courtyard Kitchen in Fez, a journalist, and member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council. She has long been passionate about the Mediterranean diet and aims to create new flavours and techniques by revisiting traditional Moroccan and Spanish ingredients and recipes.

Antonia Tsichlidou, MD, PhD, is president of the Ulisse Health Foundation and Professor Emeritus at the University of Athens School of Medicine. She has served as president of the Federation of the European Nutrition Societies (FENS) and as chairwoman or key member of numerous Greek and European Commission and World Health Organization Committees, and is a member of the TMC Scientific and Technical Advisory Council.

Teresa Gutiérrez is chef-owner of Azafrán in Spain’s La Mancha region, which currently holds a Michelin Bité Gourmand and a Sól Repol. Having studied health and nutrition, she gives great importance to the union of cooking savvy meals and maintaining the raw properties of the food to create a well-balanced diet. In 2019, she received the National Gastronomy Award by JRE Spain. She is an ambassador of Protected Designation Origin La Mancha Saffron and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.

Sorina Giezen is the founder of The Kitchen Project and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council. She is also the Instituto representative for Delice Network - Network of the Good Food Cities of the World and Mediterra, to share and promote the culinary heritage of the Mediterranean countries.

Diana Koniakowska is the host of My Greek Table on PBS and the award-winning author of many books on Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, including Flavie Lessons on Food, Life & Longevity from the Greek Island Where People Forget to Die. She runs the Delicious Greek Cooking School in Haria and is a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.

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THE OLIVE GROVE, AN ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CROP

This article was contributed by Olive Oils from Spain, the Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional Organization, a member of the TMC Business Leadership and Innovation Council and a sponsor of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.

Nowadays, it is increasingly common for citizens to be concerned about actions that may contribute to harming the planet. A recently survey of 27,000 residents from 27 countries of the European Union demonstrated that consumers are showing more concern every day for the environmental impact of food. Fifty-two percent of respondents believe that one of the main objectives of Europe’s agricultural policy should be environmental protection and fight against climate change. All over the world, sustainability is expected to become one of the policy priorities addressed by both businesses and governments.

Taking into consideration these societal concerns, it is worth mentioning that European olive oil is one of these sustainable products that helps to increase biodiversity and meets all the requirements to be considered an environmentally friendly product. Olive oils are much more than just another ingredient in daily basic cuisine. It is the fruit of know-how forged for millennia around the Mediterranean, aimed to all those who seek to incorporate into their daily diet healthful elements that also stand out for their quality and offer a maximum guarantees of food safety and sustainability.

The Olive Oil World Tour, a campaign promoted by Olive Oils from Spain with the support of the European Union, provides a detailed explanation of the efforts of the biodiversity conservation for olive cultivation. Some of the main reasons why olive oil is a sustainable product that takes care of the planet are:

➢ The olive grove is one of the great allies against climate change. For every kilo of greenhouse gas generated during the production of one liter of olive oil, the olive tree can fix 10 kilos of these gases in the soil and in the tree itself.

➢ The olive is the leading crop of organic production in Spain, with almost 200,000 hectares in 2018, a farming system that amounts to 450,000 hectares throughout Europe.

➢ With 2.6 million hectares, the olive tree is the largest humanized forest in Spain. It gives rise to a unique ecosystem, which spatially highlights its diversity of birds that live linked to it.

For all these reasons it can be said that the olive tree forests are a living, organic, and sustainable ecosystem. This has been demonstrated by the project LIFE+ OLIVE ALIVE, an initiative in collaboration with the European Commission to increase profitability in olive farming by restoring biodiversity. After analyzing 40 olive groves in Andalusia, 164 species of birds of up to 19 different genera were found, a quarter of all the species documented in the Iberian Peninsula. Similarly, up to 96 species of ants have been detected, more than one hundred species of bees, 549 types of herbaceous plants; and 137 woody plants (17 percent of the Andalusian vascular flora and 7 percent of the Iberian one).

Moreover, scientists encountered an unexpected and major surprise when they discovered a new endemic plant species, designated as Linaria qartobensis. This biodiversity is a treasure that is being recognized by new initiatives such as a proposal in front of UNESCO of recognizing the landscape of olive groves of Andalusia as a World Heritage.

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This and other projects are expected to serve as a government recommended agricultural policy model, while encouraging consumers making purchasing decisions to take into account the sustainability factors of production. Because you must not forget that by cooking with olive oil, you not only take care of yourself and your family, but also of the planet.

Project LIFE+ OLIVE ALIVE, cofounded by the EU, FPCO, and Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional Organization, looks to increase the profitability of olive orchards through biodiversity measures. It is coordinated by SEO BirdLife, with the participation of the Jaen Province Government, the University of Jaen, and CNCS.

About Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional Organization
Olive Oils from Spain is the promotional brand of the Spanish Olive Oil Interprofessional, a nonprofit organization formed by all the representative associations of the Spanish olive oil sector whose main objective is the dissemination of the healthy product internationally.

For more information, visit www.oliveoilworldtour.eu (EU), www.oliveoilworldtour.com (USA), www.oliveoilworldtour.jp (Japan), www.oliveoilworldtour.cn (China), and www.oliveoilworldtour.tw (Taiwan).
The International Olive Council (IOC) is the central forum for every individual working at all levels of the global olive sector.

Its activities aim to improve the quality of olive products by modernising olive growing and the industry in an environmentally friendly way, standardising and expanding trade, developing consumption through promotional campaigns based on the results of scientific research and also by spreading awareness of IOC standards and the various distinct categories.

Since its creation, the IOC has worked to identify analytical criteria for detecting fraud and determining quality in olive oils and olive-pomace oils. The limits of each of these analytical criteria for designations and the corresponding analytical methods are subject to consensus by the members of the IOC before they are introduced to the standards. Trade standards applicable to olive oils, olive-pomace oils and table olives, which members undertake to apply in accordance with their respective legislation and to respect in international trade, concern the specifications of each of the designations for olive oils, olive-pomace oils and table olives.

Harmonising standards is essential to facilitating international trade, promoting fair trade practices, ensuring systematic monitoring, and protecting consumers both in terms of health and of the conformity of products to their label. Agreements are drawn up with the World Trade Organisation to safeguard sanitary and phytosanitary measures as well as technical barriers to trade.

The analytical methods mentioned in both the IOC trade standard and the Codex Alimentarius food standard are the same; the latter of which was adopted at the 44th Codex Commission in July 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. These are international methods that have been duly validated with margins of precision, adopted by the IOS, IUPAC, IOC and AOCS. The methods with reference COI/T.20 are available on the IOC website.

The IOC and Codex Alimentarius have always worked together to harmonise standards for trade and food. This first materialised in June and July 2003 when the IOC adopted the revision of the trade standard and the Codex Alimentarius Commission adopted the revision of the food standard at its 26th session in Rome, Italy. As for table olives, the Codex standard was harmonised with the 2004 revision of the IOC standard between June and July 2013, also in Rome.

Cooperation between these two bodies has also taken the form of studies and surveys organised by the Executive Secretariat in the olive oil producing countries of the world. Parameter limits are set with composition in mind.

A new study on fatty acids has been launched by the IOC and studies and bibliographic research into ethyl esters, POPs and GADs will be made available to the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils as part of the ongoing revision of the Codex standard.
THE ORGANOLEPTIC ASSESSMENT OF VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, AN ESSENTIAL QUALITY CRITERION THAT COMPLEMENTS CHEMICAL ANALYSIS

It was at the Institute of Fats in Seville, Spain in the 1970s that sensory analysis was first applied to olive oil. In 1986, the IOC decided to launch a study to develop a method, using internationally recognised standards and methods, to objectively assess the taste and colour of the different olive oil denominations.

From 1982 to 1986, experts in sensory analysis and olive oil from six countries developed a method that was then adopted by the IOC in 1987 and introduced into legislation in 1991. The standardisation of the organoleptic assessment of olive oil is now 33 years old.

The introduction of organoleptic assessment in the IOC trade standard as a quality criterion, in the same way as free acidity, the peroxide value and absorbency, to differentiate the denominations of virgin olive oils, has worried the olive industry and trade. Given the lack of experience in applying the method at the time, comments were made on inconsistencies in the assessments given by the panel, even though the margins of error were the same as those found in many chemical analysis methods.

In 1992, the Council made the decision to revise the method so that virgin olive oils could be classified through the perception of defects, or lack thereof, their intensity, and the perception of fruitiness. Mathematical measures have been applied in order to eliminate any source of subjectivity: robust statistics using the median, the coefficient of variation, 95% confidence intervals, etc. In this way, the taster measures the intensity of various variables on a continuous scale that facilitates the mathematical use of data and their automatic entry, giving the taster the freedom to indicate his or her perception without the constraints of intervals.

Since organoleptic assessment was introduced into both the standard and community legislation, producers and operators in the sector have directed their efforts towards improving quality in virgin olive oils. The image of olive oil quality, and in particular the organoleptic characteristics of fruitiness, has been boosted by better information for consumers, regional, national and international competitions; and soaring demands for and grants of designations of origin.

Over the years, the method has been constantly updated, and a major revision was adopted in 2007. Studies are ongoing, and a guide is being drawn up to verify compliance with the given category to avoid legal uncertainty. Work to improve panel harmonisation is also underway.

INTERNATIONAL OLIVE COUNCIL ACCREDITATION FOR PHYSICO-CHEMICAL AND SENSORIAL ANALYSIS LABORATORIES

Annual trials to check the competence of physico-chemical analysis laboratories and tasting panels are organised to seek the approval of the IOC for the period from 1 December of each year to 30 November the following year, under the terms of the corresponding decisions. This is fundamental to ensuring better quality control.

Ring tests to monitor physico-chemical and sensory analysis laboratories are also highly important, not only to check the competence of the laboratories but also to gather statistical data on different methods.

The aim of this test is not only to monitor laboratories and establish the precision margins of the analytical methods, but also to publish a reference list of chemical analysis laboratories and tasting panels that have been approved by the IOC. This list is revised annually.

THE MARIO SOLINAS QUALITY AWARD FOR EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

In 1993, as part of the objectives of the International Agreement on Olive Oil and Table Olives, the Council decided to establish an international competition to find the best extra virgin olive oils as judged by an international panel. The competition was named in honour of Dr Mario Solinas, to pay tribute to his extensive research into olives and olive growing.

Every year, entries are submitted in ever-greater numbers, showing the importance the sector attaches to the international recognition of their efforts to produce extra virgin olive oils with high-end organoleptic characteristics.

The success of the 20 previous editions of the Mario Solinas Quality Award suggests that the 21th edition in 2022 will attract an even wider range of entries, which will in turn raise awareness among consumers of the organoleptic characteristics of top-quality extra virgin olive oils.

CONCLUSION

The International Olive Council aims to encourage the expansion of international trade in olive oil and table olives, to develop, update and harmonise trade standards in order to improve quality, safeguard authenticity and protect consumers.

Apart from its composition and organoleptic, nutritional and gastronomic properties, it is important that the organoleptic assessment of virgin olive oils is recognised and accepted at all levels of the olive sector.

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The rules of the competition, which can be found on the IOC website, specify the conditions for entering an oil and the evaluation procedure conducted by a number of panels approved by the IOC and by an international panel that select the winning oils.

The method was developed and adopted by the Council in 1987. It is a scientifically based means of sensory analysis using the senses, mathematics, statistics and standardisation, with the best margins of repeatability and reproducibility.

Smell and taste are the only characteristics the consumer perceives in virgin olive oil. The efforts of producers (olive growers and industry) to improve quality mean we can train consumers to cultivate the taste for virgin olive oil and diversify the gastronomic characteristics of extra virgin olive oils according to their geographical origin, the varieties of olives used and the technology available.

All the IOC standards, guidelines, methods of analysis, science on olive oil, and health information related to olive oil products are updated and available at www.internationaloliveoil.org.
The olive oil–rich, traditional Mediterranean Diet has been widely inspiring healthier food choices among Americans for more than two decades. Over that time, we have come to accept olive oil as part of the American market basket, not just an exotic ingredient belonging to other distant cultures. And further, we have come to understand that, like wine and some foods, there is a whole world of olive oil—full of varietals, styles, aromatics, and markers of excellence.

Today, as chefs and consumers are expanding their aspirations for change around food, health, sustainability, and food system innovation—together with a wider appetite for culinary discovery—a new vision of an American, plant-forward kitchen is capturing our attention. Relying on both global flavors and seasonal, regional, and even hyper-local ingredients, chefs and home cooks alike are embracing plant-forward ideas in the kitchen that reflect human and planetary health imperatives and simultaneously embrace new pathways towards deliciousness.

Let’s explore, then, the substantive ways that the plant-forward, olive oil kitchen—rooted in the Mediterranean but now being reimagined as well in America and beyond—can leverage flavor and expand our repertoire of culinary techniques as we craft the future of our food.
The Plant-Forward Kitchen: The Mediterranean as Inspiration

As an outgrowth of its Menus of Change initiative, the CIA—together with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition—distilled much of the initiative’s mission and sustainability guidance into a single phrase to help how chefs and foodservice operators think about the future of their work around menu innovation: “plant forward.” At the CIA’s new Plant-Forward Kitchen website, we describe “plant-forward” as:

“A style of cooking and eating that emphasizes and celebrates, but is not limited to, foods from plant sources—fruits and vegetables (produce), whole grains, legumes (pulses), nuts and seeds, plant oils, and herbs and spices—and reflects evidence-based principles of health and sustainability.” Importantly, the term plant-forward is designed to include three approaches to increasing plant-based foods in the diets and on our menus: 1) an omnivore or flexitarian approach, 2) vegetarian, and 3) vegan. “Plant-based”—in describing an entire dietary pattern—is often equated with vegetarian and/or vegan, whereas “plant-forward” speaks to the preferences of a larger demographic group interested in pursuing healthier, more sustainable plant-rich diets that can include modest amounts of fish, poultry, dairy, eggs, and even the occasional hamburger or small steak. A recent Nielsen Homescan survey reported that 76% of Americans are “actively trying to eat more plant-based foods.”

This description of plant-forward is a good match with the traditional, Mediterranean Diet as codified now in the scientific literature and inspired, in part, by the cultural models of healthy eating one found in Crete, the rest of Greece, southern Italy, and many other parts of the Mediterranean in 1960. Yes, there are animal foods in the traditional Mediterranean Diet—in much more modest amounts than we are used to in the US or Northern Europe—but our interest here is what made the plant parts of the plant-forward Mediterranean kitchen so pleasurable for those who lived in those cultures at that time, as well as now. In other words, what was it about the region’s culinary strategies and techniques in preparing fruits and vegetables, grains, pulses, and nuts that was so compelling?

THE HEAT OF THE KITCHEN: COOKING WITH OLIVE OIL

There is a lifetime of culinary pleasure and experimentation to be experienced with olive oil of one never actually heated the oil, but rather simply used it in raw or cold preparations and as a finishing condiment. However, applying heat to olive oil—and cooking with it—adds other layers of culinary possibility.

In general, when using the best, most aromatic extra virgin olive oils—such as those with intense green fruitiness or medium green fruitiness—it is best to cook at lower temperatures to preserve the aromatics. This is not, however, a matter of safety or smoke point, but simply flavor preservation (and the preservation of antioxidants and other healthful, bioactive compounds). As Catalan-born, Austin-based chef Daniel Olivella likes to emphasize, “if making a sofrito—a base of many Catalan and Spanish dishes—one adds good olive oil and chopped onions to a cold pan and keeps the pan on lower heat for a longer period of time, the result will be delicious, still aromatic, melted onions. Chef Ana Sortun of Oleana in Cambridge, Massachusetts follows a similar strategy, often keeping pan heat low and aromatic olive oil below a certain temperature as it builds flavor in her vegetable-centric, Eastern Mediterranean-inspired cooking.

Try cooking a soft scramble of eggs with an aromatic olive oil on low to medium low heat and you’ll never think of eggs the same way again. Similarly, very simple pasta dishes—such as a spaghetti with only Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, some fresh cracked pepper, perhaps some fresh herbs, and a copious amounts of an excellent olive oil—benefit from adding most of the oil at room temperature or with minimal heating. The same is true for other low and slow Mediterranean preparations mentioned below.

The higher the heat and the more complex the preparation, the less important it is to use the most aromatic (typically expensive) oils, unless of course one’s budget can afford excellence even here. But in this case, we still encourage the use of good-quality extra virgin olive oil whenever an option.

Then comes the question that has generated much heat on the Web: can you (deep) fry with olive oil? First, let’s state that yes, you can absolutely fry with olive oil with great results. But that is not really the right question to be asking. The better question is what is the best way to deep fry with olive oil? And the following question: what should I consider when thinking about how to fry with olive oil?

Here’s what you need to know, according to the technical experts at the International Olive Council:

“Olive oil is ideal for frying. In proper temperature conditions, without over-heating, it undergoes no substantial structural change and keeps its nutritional value better than other oils, not only because of the antioxidants but also due to its high levels of oleic acid. Its high smoke point (≥230°C/456°F) is substantially higher than the ideal temperature for frying food (180°C/356°F).”

An interesting paper recently published in the journal AJCA’s Scientific Nutrition Health by Australian researcher C. Guillaume et al. reveals that there is more than a high smoke point that recommends olive oil for frying. They found, after heating a number of common oils including extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) to 250°C and then holding the oils at 180°C for 6 hours, that the “EVOO yielded low levels of (unhealthy) polar compounds and oxidative by-products (compared with other oils). EVOO’s fatty acid profile and natural antioxidant content allowed the oil to remain stable when heated (unlike oils with high levels of polysaturated fats [PUFAs] which degraded more readily).”

But turning once again to the issue of flavor preservation and cost (versus solely focusing on safety and health), if one is shallow frying small amounts of food where less oil is required (such as with pan-fried, blanched almonds), it will likely make sense to use a good-quality extra virgin olive oil—depending on budgets and desired flavor outcomes. In the case of deep frying, where large amounts of oil are required, many chefs and cooks will switch to the less expensive “olive oil” where one is getting some portion of the benefits (like flavor). A form of experimentation to be experienced with olive oil if one enjoys trying new oils. If you haven’t tried deep frying with olive oil—or extra virgin olive oil—you are missing out on what Mediterranean people have enjoyed for centuries, from eggplant fritters to fried small fish to falafel.

One final note on frying: one area that deserved more attention is around variables affecting frying temperature when sautéing vegetables. When vegetables are sautéed in a pan with extra virgin olive oil, the high moisture content of the vegetables—depending on the type of vegetables, their configuration in the pan, and the amount of oil used—can contribute to keeping pan temperatures lower that what might be imagined, and thereby conserving more of the special flavors and other positive attributes of extra virgin olive oil.

Olive Oil, Vegetables, Pulses, and Whole Grains: Seasonality and Culinary Insight

The contemporary plant-forward movement in the US can also be characterized as “veg-centric,” that is focused on vegetables as the culinary stars. Foundational for success with vegetables in restaurant and foodservice settings is, of course, having the best possible, seasonal, high-flavor ingredients. Having secured that, the Mediterranean olive oil kitchen has much to offer in terms of culinary strategy.

Where Americans have most embraced olive oil—including some of the world’s very best olive oils—for salads and cold preparations. There is still much to learn here, though, including the size and depth of what we might call the Mediterranean olive oil “cold kitchen.” But even when making what we would consider a more contemporary, American salad, a spirit of discovery can bring important new results. Joshua McFadden, chef and owner of Ava Gene’s in Portland, OR, and author of Six Seasons: A New Way with Vegetables, reckons how to dress a salad to maximize aromatics and the overall taste experience: he advises to first add the vinegar, salt, and crushed-cracked pepper, toss—and only then add the olive oil, toss again, and serve and eat immediately. And this from someone who takes his oil very seriously. “Olive oil is a huge reason I enjoy cooking. I really wish I had no idea how about to make food taste good without it.”

Beyond salads, taps, mezze, and a variety of cooked vegetable and mixed preparation dishes, a few additional strategies warrant our attention:

On the one hand, Americans’ current obsession with the best possible produce simply prepared—and served raw or lightly cooked and still brightly colored—has produced many delicious food experiences. Few people would care to characterize dull, grey, overcooked brocoli sitting on a steam table for a couple of hours. And yet, from a Mediterranean perspective, Americans are largely missing out on a whole category of vegetable (for vegetable and pulses) cooking the Greeks call “lathara.” These are essentially vegetables braised or stewed in olive oil with onions, garlic, tomatoes, various herbs (basil, parsley, dill, mint, oregano, etc.), sometimes beans or other pulses, and then finished with more olive oil.
The visual result is not necessarily cover material for a glossy American food magazine, but when made with peak-season produce and the best olive oils, the flavors are truly seductive. Importantly, the long, slow cooking preserves the aromatics in the oil, the produce, and the herbs.

A related technique that holds great promise for American cooks and chefs is the use of sous vide for slowly cooking vegetables—or other foods to go into veg-centric meals—in olive oil. In restaurants, chefs often shy away from purchasing and using the best olive oils because of expense. Some years ago, Kyle Connaughton, chef/owner of SingleThread in Healdsburg, CA, presented the possibilities of sous vide in the olive oil kitchen to an international audience of top olive oil producers at a Beyond Extra Virgin conference in Cordoba, in the south of Spain. Chef Connaughton chose leeks to cook with a small amount of excellent olive oil—and slow in sous vide, achieving meltingly tender but still-intact leeks which married the still-very-much-intact aromatics from both the oil and the leeks. “The consensus in tasting the dish? A culinary triumph.”

Or for a memorable preparation of a classically veg-centric salada magro, use the sous vide method with the tuna in a stellared olive oil with either mild green fruitiness or ripe fruitiness. Again, low and slow yielding spectacular results at manageable costs. Vacuum technology can also leverage the flavors of small amounts of fine olive oil with great results through a process of pressurized marinade.

Cold, Mediterranean-inspired soup is another underleveraged item that should have more prominence on American menus. What could the south of Spain be without the justifiably ubiquitous gazpacho? But why not apply that same approach and technique to a host of cold, puréed soups for summers in the US? Not apply that same approach and technique to a host without the justifiably ubiquitous gazpacho? But why underleveraged item that should have more prominence?

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Then, if one thinks of the imperative in the plant-forward kitchen to cook and consume more pulses—beans, lentils, and chickpeas—the olive oil kitchen has much to offer. Pulses are central to Mediterranean cooking, and olive oil is used as a flavoring at the start of the cooking process, at the end, or when added to more complex preparations such as the tempering oil has much to offer. Pulses are central to Mediterranean cooking, and olive oil is used as a flavoring at the start of the cooking process, at the end, or when added to more complex preparations such as the tempering oil.

As mentioned above, Americans are now very familiar with hummus (chickpea puréed with toasted sesame seeds, garlic, and olive oil) but much less so with the Santorini-style fava (yellow split peas, cooked and raw onions, olive oil, and lemon).

**Baking, Pastry, and Sweets: Olive Oil, a New Frontier**

Often, Americans or other non-Mediterranean chefs and home cooks who are passionate users of olive oil have a blind spot when it comes to baking, pastry, and desserts. And yet here also olive oil and the plant-forward kitchen—based in traditional Mediterranean food cultures but not limited by them—have much to offer. If you have never had a semolina cake with ground almonds, citrus, and a medium fruity (or whatever your preference is) extra virgin olive oil, you have no idea what you have been missing. High-quality, extra virgin olive oil brings amazing new flavor dimensions to cakes, cookies, breads, and more. (From a functional perspective, some modest adjustment will likely need to be made to the amount of olive oil used when swapping out butter.)

Similarly, the world of ice cream will never be the same once you discover what an aromatic, extra virgin olive oil can do in this arena, whether paired with dark chocolate or flavors a bit more exotic including blood orange, passion fruit, saffron, rosemary, or fig.

**Mediterranean Sauce-Making: Leveraging for American Menus**

Many would argue, with good reason, that the very best Mediterranean sauce is simply a great olive oil, well-chosen to match the food being prepared. However, across the Mediterranean region, one of the strokes of genius of the olive oil kitchen was the development of a whole collection of toasted or blended sauces that always include olive oil and garlic with ingredients ranging from nuts and seeds to spices, herbs, and other aromatics; tomatoes; peppers; eggplant; citrus; and/or yogurt. Variations of this focus on the addition of olive oil, harissa, garlic, and cumin to the chickpeas, and in Morocco, olive oil adds richness and flavor to harissa, a spiced vegetable soup with chickpeas, lentils, cilantro, and lemon. In the south of France, the popular panisse, or chickpea fries, would be inconceivable without olive oil for frying. In the eastern Mediterranean, as Americans now know well, hummus is created as a purée of chickpeas, tahini, and olive typically served with a swirl of olive oil on top, and falafel, another chickpea prodigy and now a global favorite, is fried in olive oil.

On the whole grain front, the Circassian dalois salad famously tops whole-grain barley rusk with grated tomato, fresh cheese, olives, capers, and copious amounts of local olive oil. Whole grains never tasted so good. Whole-wheat pasta with chickpeas (more chickpeas?) and olive oil—cioci e tritum—reminds us of the richness of the Pugliese kitchen of southern Italy.

**Mediterranean Eggplant Sauces**

Eggplant; citrus; and/or yogurt. Variations of this focus on the addition of olive oil, harissa, garlic, and cumin to the chickpeas, and in Morocco, olive oil adds richness and flavor to harissa, a spiced vegetable soup with chickpeas, lentils, cilantro, and lemon. In the south of France, the popular panisse, or chickpea fries, would be inconceivable without olive oil for frying. In the eastern Mediterranean, as Americans now know well, hummus is created as a purée of chickpeas, tahini, and olive typically served with a swirl of olive oil on top, and falafel, another chickpea prodigy and now a global favorite, is fried in olive oil.

Similarly, the world of ice cream will never be the same once you discover what an aromatic, extra virgin olive oil can do in this arena, whether paired with dark chocolate or flavors a bit more exotic including blood orange, passion fruit, saffron, rosemary, or fig.
THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET AND THE GLOBAL MARKET BASKET: SOURCING FROM AMERICAN FARMS AND FISHERIES

This article is based on contributions from the US Department of Agriculture, a member of the TMC Business Leadership and Innovation Council and a sponsor of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.

The traditional, healthy Mediterranean Diet is rooted in the products of the region, from the Mediterranean Sea to the groves, orchards, gardens and farms, and producers within the geographical expanses surrounding that sea. But the principles of the Mediterranean Diet—the pattern of the diet and its flavor insights—are accessible to people around the world.

The delicious, global heritage of the Mediterranean kitchen invites us to both preserve and adapt, reimagining ingredients wherever we are in whatever country. The Mediterranean Diet has become remarkably popular in the United States, and here we consider the contributions that American products can make to a Mediterranean-inspired dietary pattern anywhere in the world.
The United States is home to varieties of fish and seafood such as salmon from Alaska, lobster, winter skate, dogfish, scallops, or monkfish, along with lentils, sweet potatoes from North Carolina, or almonds, pistachios, and walnuts from California. Sustainability and nutrition are central concerns for producers of foods such as these, who work on reducing their environmental impacts while also collaborating on research projects that demonstrate the healthfulness of their products.

For example, in California, almond producers have established a list of sustainability goals for 2025. Those include achieving zero waste, reducing the amount of water used to grow a pound of almonds by another 40 percent on top of the 75 percent already reduced through the adoption of micro irrigation; increase the adoption of environmentally friendly pest management measures by 25 percent; and reducing dust during harvest by 90 percent.

Increasingly, consumers are looking for foods that help control risk factors and provide health benefits, especially for digestive and cardiovascular health. This is true for both American and Spanish consumers. A new clinical study by Pennsylvania State University and Juniata College reveals that walnut consumption could contribute to a connection between cardiovascular health and intestinal health. The findings of this new study, published in the prestigious Journal of Nutrition, show that walnut consumption enriches certain intestinal bacteria in the digestive system that are associated with improvements in cholesterol and blood pressure. Researchers believe this may be due to the unique combination of bioactive compounds, fatty acids, and dietary fiber in walnuts.

On the occasion of World Nutrition Day 2020, Dr. Ra- mon Estruch, consultant at the Internal Medicine Service of the Hospital Clinic in Barcelona and coordinator of the study on Prevention with the Mediterranean Diet (PRE- DIMED), endorsed a study carried out by the University of Illinois that shows that **pistachios** is a complete protein. With this new finding, pistachios join quinoa, chickpeas and soy, and is added to the reduced list of foods with complete protein of vegetable origin. Estruch also highlights the latest studies that point out the properties of this nut as a cardiometabolic protector and its effects in the prevention of colon cancer.

Nut lovers who want to lose weight may feel better about eating pistachios, as the results of a new study developed by the University of California (San Diego) show. Research led by Dr. Cheryl Rock, published in the journal Nutrients, shows that adding pistachios to the diet can contribute to weight loss in both a restricted weight loss plan and behavioral intervention, while providing additional health benefits such as lowering blood pressure. While several scientific studies show that pistachios are useful for maintaining a healthy weight or will not cause weight gain, this is the first study to examine pistachio behavior as part of a weight loss diet, in a real-world setting.

The US has been increasing sustainable fishing practices long before it became the concern that it is today. The Northeast coast of the country carries out responsible fishing and as such, produces sea products of great quality. The American Atlantic scallop and lobster are two examples of responsible, well-managed fishing.

Thanks to strict regulations and management efforts, red fish no longer is overfished and its stock has been rebuilt. It is now classified as fully reintiated. Commercial fishermen usually capture red fish year-round with dragging nets, as well as with hook and line. The mesh of the trawl nets must be a minimum size to reduce the capture of small redfish and non-target species. As for spiny dogfish, its population in US waters is high compared to other parts of the world.

Alaska seafood is a key source of omega-3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) that are essential for heart health, suppress inflammatory responses, improve blood flow, and participate in brain function. Alaska Seafood is also high in many essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamins E, A, D, and B-12. It provides a complete, high-quality protein that maintains muscle and bone strong and healthy.

Let’s not forget legumes and sweet potatoes, as we shift to more plant-forward menus. North Carolina is home to more than 30 percent of the production of sweet potatoes in the US, thanks to its humid subtropical climate and sandy soil that make for perfect growing conditions. The sweet potatoes are harvested year round and can stay in climate-controlled storage facilities. Studies show that the content of carotenoids, such as beta caro- tene, increases over time. Beta carotene gives the root its orange color and is changed into vitamin A in the human body. Curing also reduces the risk of decay or dents on the skin, and intensifies their flavor.

As for legumes, they are authentic superfoods that play a crucial role in healthy eating and in the sustainable production of food that is becoming a new gastronomic trend. They are considered a superhealthy food because they lack cholesterol and gluten. Their glycemic index and fat content are practically zero, while they have a high iron content. They are also rich in minerals and B vitamins, as well as protein, folic acid, and fiber. On the sustainability front, legumes help fix nitrogen in the soil, making farmers less dependent on synthetic fertilizers and also increasing the biodiversity of the soil. They also allow the water used by other protein sources, extracting water from shallower soil layers, even allowing other crops to benefit from their cultivation.

For more information on the USDA, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

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### Fig Sweet Potato Towers with Brie

**Makes 8**

- 2 sweet potatoes from North Carolina
- 20 g walnuts
- 150 g brie
- 4 figs
- 1 tbs. olive oil
- Fleur de sel, pepper
- Ground allspice
- 3 splashes of lemon juice
- 8 rosemary twigs

1. Peel sweet potatoes, and diagonally cut them into 8 thick pieces. Pre-cook them in boiling water for approx. 5 minutes. Filter the water out and place the sweet potatoes on paper towels to drain.
2. Chop up walnuts and roast them in a pan without fat, then put them in a bowl. Cut the brie into 8 pieces and press the slices into the bowl of walnuts. Wash the figs and spread them out to let them dry. Strip the bottom needles away from the rosemary twigs, so that only a bundle of rosemary is left in the end.
3. Heat up oil in a coated pan. Fry sweet potatoes for approx. 4 minutes. Season with Fleur de sel, pepper, and allspice, and thorn lemon juice over the potatoes. Take the potatoes out of the pan to cool.
4. Put a slice of sweet potato on a plate, then top with a piece of brie, another slice of sweet potato, and 1/4 fig. Stick a rosemary twig in the middle to keep the tower together.

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Tartar of Pardina Lentils with Piparra Juice and Crispy Cumin
Makes 1
80 g cooked Pardina lentils
40 g avocado
15 g olive oil
10 g beet juice
15 g carrot in brunoise
10 g turnip in brunoise
5 g fennel in brunoise
10 g zucchini in brunoise
1 g salt
0.50 g pepper

Piparra Juice
80 g pickled peppers
5 g olive oil
0.10 g xanthan

Crispy Cumin
Olive oil
½ cumin papadum
Vene cress

1. Prepare the tartar: Blend together the avocado, olive oil, beet juice, and vinegar to create an emulsion. Mix the dressing with the lentils, carrots, turnips, fennel, and zucchinis. Season with the salt and pepper.
2. Prepare the piparra juice: Liquefy and bind with the oil and xanthan reserve filmed to skin.
3. Prepare the crispy cumin: Heat the oil to 160ºC. Cut the ½ papadum in pieces and fry it in the oil for a few seconds. Using tweezers, transfer it to paper towel and give it the desired shape.
4. Assembly: Use a ring to mount the tartar. Garnish with crispy cumin papadum pieces and vene cress leaves. Finish with dollops of piparra juice.

Wild Alaskan Salmon Mediterranean Style
Makes 8
¾ cup fresh rosemary
3 tablespoons freshly chopped garlic
½ tablespoon sea salt
½ tablespoon pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
4 Alaskan salmon fillets
1 lemon cut in slices

1. In a small bowl mix the rosemary, garlic, salt, and pepper. Add the spoonful of olive oil to make a thick paste.
2. Press the mixture into the cut sides of each Alaskan salmon fillet (not into skin) and let rest for 5 minutes before cooking.
3. Heat the grill to medium-high heat with a little oil. Grill for 12 to 15 minutes if the salmon is frozen, and 8 to 9 minutes if fresh.
4. Serve with lemon slices.

Find the Spanish version of this recipe here.

Wild Alaskan Salmon Mediterranean Style

Find the Spanish version of this recipe here.
SUSTAINABLE NUTRITION MODULE ADDED TO FEED THE PLANET CURRICULUM

This article is based on contributions from Custom Culinary®, a member of the TMC Business Leadership and Innovation Council and a sponsor of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.

As thought leaders, chefs have the responsibility to help their customers make better choices, without sacrificing flavor. If our customers are not healthy, if the planet is not healthy, if we are not healthy, our entire future is endangered. Having a basic understanding of nutrition and how it connects to current sustainability imperatives is thus essential.

Scientists are establishing clear connections between our food system and climate change, showing the negative impact that many of our production and distribution practices have on the environment. They similarly demonstrate that foods that are healthier for us tend to be more sustainable. And globally, the percentage of food consumed that is prepared by professionals is rapidly increasing; in both China and the United States, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, food away from home now represents more than 50 percent of household food expenditure.

In a partnership initiated by Custom Culinary® and Worldchefs, The Torribera Mediterranean Center developed an additional, eighth, module on Sustainable Nutrition for Worldchefs’ Feed the Planet™ Sustainability Education for Culinary Professionals program. “Through this module, we are helping to provide chefs with science-based information on sustainable nutrition and practical tools and advice to create more nutritious menus, thus contributing to a more sustainable future,” said Rochelle Schaetzl, Marketing Manager, Custom Culinary Europe.

Feed the Planet is an initiative founded by Worldchefs to inspire sustainable food consumption among communities and culinary professionals as well as to support people in need through education. Trainers and trainees receive free digital lodges and certificates upon completion of the Sustainability Education for Culinary Professionals program, which aims to teach chefs how to think and act sustainably to lead positive change for the planet—and for improved profitability in the kitchen.

In the first seven modules, the Feed the Planet curriculum examines the sustainability of many different elements that are part of our day-to-day lives as chefs, from agriculture to seafood to waste management. This module on sustainable nutrition brings all of these elements together, for example by connecting animal husbandry and plant-forward menus, at the level where chefs can most act as individuals. The strategies taught around sustainable nutrition are strategies chefs can apply at home just as much as at work, another important element of changemaking. Putting sustainable nutrition at the center of any new dish, menu, or new operational design will allow them to improve the overall sustainability of their operations/restaurant/home, with changes that range from small to large.

The sustainable nutrition module opens with big picture perspectives on nutrition and sustainability, reviewing the kinds of foods that have the greatest environmental impact and key definitions around proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, and looking at global nutrition issues. It clearly makes the case for more plant-based menus globally, with definitions and nuances. Then it dives into strategies for implementation, with examples from a range of operations, from fine dining to campus dining, from around the world. Exercises and group activities encourage students to share their own experiences and examples.

“For me, this module is a perfect conclusion to the Worldchefs’ sustainability curriculum,” said Chris Koetke, World Chefs’ Chairman of the Feed the Planet Committee. “It reinforces a fundamental realization that what is good for me personally is good for the planet also. Too long, nutrition has been a marginalized topic for many chefs. This module brings it to the forefront and meshes it with a larger global struggle for a sustainable future.”

The module functions as a blue print for how chefs should think of nutrition in a sustainable context. It is not a nutrition course; rather, it is a course that provides tools for action and shows chefs how healthy food and healthy planet go hand in hand. It helps chefs make changes to their existing menus with a checklist of impactful improvements that can be made immediately, and details clear steps to take for more sustainable, plant-forward menus going forward.

“Chefs have a huge responsibility, feeding us while making responsible decisions for planetary health. We hope that this module will help them do so more easily,” said Anne E. McBride, PhD, deputy director, Torribera Mediterranean Center.

For more information, visit www.feedtheplanet.worldchefs.org/Sustainability and www.customculinary.com.
Every day in restaurants and home kitchens across the Mediterranean region, chefs and cooks transform local vegetables and other plant-sourced flavors into the delicious heart of the Mediterranean Diet. Whether it’s wild greens for Greek horta and pita; pureed red peppers, garlic and almonds for a Spanish romesco sauce; Turkish eggplant roasted in embers; chickpeas and squash for North African vegetable tagines; or artichokes, peas, and fava beans to celebrate the Italian spring—the Mediterranean plant-forward kitchen astonishes with culinary strategies honed over centuries.

At its foundation, flavor in the plant-forward Mediterranean kitchen begins—and often ends—with extra virgin olive oil, the plant-juice of the olive tree, in all of its varietal splendor. From there, regional cooks build up their recipes by tapping a rich biodiversity of plant-sourced ingredients including grains (typically whole grains in the historical diet), an abundance of fruits and vegetables, beans, lentils, and other pulses; nuts and seeds; wild and cultivated greens and herbs; and a phenomenal pantry of spices and other aromatics. Foods from animal sources were enjoyed as part of the Mediterranean table, but they traditionally played a smaller role in the region’s food ways. In Greece, for example, in the early 1960s, people consumed on average about 35 grams (about 1 ¼ oz.) of meat and poultry per day.

Though the health-promoting and culinary reputation of the Mediterranean Diet is now widely known in much of the world outside of the Mediterranean region, including in the United States, that understanding rarely grasps the breadth and depth of flavor strategies and techniques that these plant-forward traditions have to offer. In addition, not nearly enough attention has been paid to how the traditional Mediterranean dietary model can contribute to the search for contemporary solutions around sustainable diets and food systems, including climate-friendly food and agricultural practices. These traditions—and those
opportunities—are a significant part of the inspiration behind a ground-breaking new educational initiative of The Culinary Institute of America (CIA) in partnership with the Food Team at Google. Google has long been a leader in providing an excellent foodservice program for its global workforce, and has steadily ramped up over many years its commitment to making those food choices at once healthy, sustainable and delicious. In 2019, the Food Team Google joined forces with the CIA to create the CIA’s Plant-Forward Kitchen Education and Certification Initiative (PFKI), now in development. When launched and available for the global foodservice and hospitality sector, the Plant-Forward Kitchen will offer a comprehensive, mostly digitally based training program focused on what we see as a vital core of the future of professional cooking: crafting dishes and menus that rely primarily, but not exclusively, on plant-sourced ingredients. The traditional Mediterranean Diet—and the plant-forward Mediterranean kitchen—will play an important role in the PFKI curriculum, alongside learnings and inspiration from other traditional cultural models for healthy, sustainable eating.

The focus on possibilities around the plant-forward kitchen is an outgrowth of Menus of Change, a joint, evidence-based initiative of the CIA and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health—Department of Nutrition. Increasingly, consumer sentiment is aligning around what the scientific community is outlining as a framework for optimal diets within planetary boundaries, anticipating a world population of 9-10 billion in less than 30 years. A summary of these concepts, imperatives and consumer and business trends was captured recently in the CIA-Harvard Chan Plant-Forward by the Numbers and the Datassential-CIA collaboration, Plant-Forward Opportunity.

“Flavor rules!” is a widely shared belief here among our Food Team members at Google,” comments Michiel Bakker, vice president, Global Workplace Services at Google. “That is why we are excited to be collaborating with the CIA on a whole collection of plant-forward initiatives, including this critical reimagining of advanced training for professional cooks and chefs, whether they are working at Google or elsewhere in our industry. And of particular interest to us is how to adapt and operationalize plant-centric flavor concepts embedded in Mediterranean culinary traditions. That is also one of the reasons why we believe in the mission and work of the CIA-University of Barcelona Torribera Mediterranean Center. There is much more to this than simply opening a cookbook. We need more research, dialogue, and field work to help our industry understand both how best to learn from these Mediterranean traditions in order to better engage our customers, reduce our global chronic disease burden, and save our planet.”

The CIA’s Plant-Forward Kitchen certification initiative, including a new digital video library, will be available to chefs everywhere beginning mid-2021.

Greg Drescher is vice president of strategic initiatives at The Culinary Institute of America.

Google is a member of the TMC Business Leadership and Innovation Council and a sponsor of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.
INCORPORATING MORE VEGETABLES ON MENUS AND TEACHING THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET: A CHEF’S LATEST PROJECTS

by Teresa Gutiérrez
En los últimos meses he tratado de incorporar más platos vegetarianos en mi cocina. La cocina tradicional manchega es alta en calorías, y ciertamente es complicado convencer a los clientes que también platos más “ligeros” identifican nuestra tierra. Desde hace tiempo, estoy trabajando con una cooperativa ecológica, sólo trabajamos productos de temporada y de cercanía. Frutas, verduras, cereales, legumbres, semillas.

Para nuestra sorpresa, algunos platos tan sencillos como una "lasaña de verduras ecológicas y Azafrán de La Mancha" está siendo cada vez más demandada que otros platos tradicionales por los que se supone que la gente viene a conocer nuestra cocina. Este ejemplo, una lasaña de verduras ecológicas (producto 100% de cercanía) también identifica nuestra cocina y nuestra tierra. Gracias al trabajo de esta cooperativa ecológica, tenemos acceso a muchos productos que antes era más difícil conseguir para nosotros, y gracias a eso muchos de nuestros clientes optan por opciones más saludables sin renunciar a comer bien y "de restaurante".

Este año, mi intención era impartir cursos de cocina para enseñar a cocinar, valorar y tratar estos productos de cercanía y crear Una quis designed y más sostenibles. Pero tendríamos que dejar este proyecto para más adelante (por supuesto, lo llevaré a cabo). Sería como una especie de pequeña Escuela de Cocina Mediterranean, donde ofreceremos también charlas de expertos en nutrición. No se trata solo de enseñar recetas, sino de cómo y dónde comprar, y de evaluar y tratar los productos de forma adecuada. Sería una manera de ayudar también a la economía de la zona. Lo creo o no, hay muchos lugares en España donde se están perdiendo las costumbres de la Dieta Mediterránea, principalmente para la gente joven. Creo que mi trabajo como chef también es comunicar, no solo cocinar. Y ahora es el momento de comunicar cómo defender nuestra dieta mediterránea. Por eso creo que estos cursos que he planeado en alianza con la cooperativa ecológica serán un buen comienzo!

En recent months, I have tried to incorporate more vegetable dishes into my kitchen. The traditional cuisine of La Mancha is high in calories, and it is certainly difficult to convince clients that “lighter” dishes also characterize our land. For a long time, I have been working with an ecological cooperative. We only use seasonal and local products: fruits, vegetables, cereals, legumes, seeds.

To our surprise, dishes as simple as a “lasagna with organic vegetables and Saffron from La Mancha” are becoming more and more in demand, over other traditional dishes for which people are supposed to know our cuisine. (This example, an organic vegetable lasagna made with 100 percent local product, also identifies our cuisine and our land!) “Thanks to the work of this ecological cooperative, we have access to many products that used to be more difficult for us to find, and thanks to that many of our clients opt for healthier options without giving up eating well and ‘restaurant food.’”

This year, my intention was to give cooking courses to teach how to cook, value, and treat these local products and create more sustainable customs. I will have to save this project for later (of course I will do it in the near future). It will be a small Mediterranean Diet Cooking School in my restaurant, where we will also offer talks by nutritional experts. I think it is also a good idea to help the economy of the area.

This project is not just about teaching recipes, it’s about how and where to buy, and about assessing and treating products in an appropriate way. Believe it or not, there are many places in Spain where the habits of the Mediterranean Diet are being lost very quickly, and mainly among young people. I think that my job as a chef is also to communicate, not just to cook. And now is the time to communicate how to defend our Mediterranean Diet. That is why I think that these courses that I have planned in alliance with the ecological cooperative will be a good start!

Teresa Gutiérrez is chef-owner of Azafrán, a regionally focused restaurant in Spain’s La Mancha region that currently holds a Michelin Bib Gourmand and a Sol Repsol. Having studied health and nutrition, she gives great importance to the union of cooking savory meals and maintaining the real properties of the food to create a well-balanced diet. In 2020, she received the National Gastronomy Award by JVE Spain. She is an ambassador of Protected Designation Origin La Mancha Saffron and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council.
SOSTENIBILITAT URBANA: BARCELONA ÉS LA CAPITAL MUNDIAL DE L’ALIMENTACIÓ SOSTENIBLE EL 2021

Aquest article va ser aportat per l'Ajuntament de Barcelona, membre del Business Leadership and Innovation Council de TMC i patrocinador de Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.

Barcelona és reconeguda internacionalment com a creadora d'un discurs alimentari propi, un teritori de canvi i innovació constant al voltant de l'alimentació, una metròpoli amb un parc agrari i una xarxa emblemàtica de mercats municipals de producte fresc, així com un teixit empresarial i acadèmic existent en l'àmbit de la gastronomia, aspectes tots ells excepcionalment entre les grans ciutats del seu entorn. Aquests elements la converteixen en un dels grans centres europeus de consum i comercialització alimentària, una metròpoli urbana en continua reflexió sobre el paper fonamental de l'alimentació en la societat actual i sobre les derivades que l'alimentació té tant des del punt de vista de la salut, l'economia i l'ecologia.

Barcelona Capital Mundial de l’Alimentació Sostenible 2021 ha de contribuir, doncs, a situar l'alimentació sostenible al centre de l’agenda política i mediàtica especialment durant aquest any i impulsar polítiques alimentàries en l’àmbit metropolità amb una implicació transversal de la societat. Entre el 9 i el 13 d’octubre de 2021, Barcelona serà la seu del 7è Fòrum Global del Pacte de Política Alimentària Urbana de Milà, un tractat internacional que existeix des del 2015 signat per 220 ciutats d’acros el món, entre elles Barcelona, que es comprometen en impulsar sistemes alimentaris més justos, sains i sostenibles. Durant aquell any, a més, es desplegaran els més de noventa projectes i projectes alimentaris que l'Ajuntament porta treballant en els darrers anys, així com un programa d'esdeveniments que girin al voltant de l'alimentació sostenible al llarg de l’any. Per últim, durant el 2021 també tindrà lloc l’elaboració d’una Estratègia de Política Alimentària amb horitzó 2030 que estigui alineada amb els Objectius de Desenvolupament Sostenible de Nacions Unides, marquen el full de ruta a seguir de les polítiques alimentàries de la ciutat després del 2021 i que contribueixi a posicionar Barcelona a nivell internacional quant a política alimentària.

La ciutat vol aprofitar aquesta oportunitat per fer un salt d'escala en la vida quotidiana de la seva ciutadania quant a l'alimentació sostenible, treballant perquè la Capital Alimentària comporti una evolució en els hàbits de consum dels barcelonins i barcelonines, es progrés decididament en quatre grans objectius: 1) avançar en la conscienciació sobre la necessitat d'introduir una dieta més saludable i sostenible en el seu dia a dia (en definitiva el que es coneix com a diètes de salut planetària), així com facilitar-la accés a tota la població de Barcelona; 2) generar més oportunitats econòmiques per als sectors de proximitat, impulsant el consum i la producció agrària ecològica i facilitant, a la vegada, una transició agroecològica a la ciutat; 3) aconseguir un canvi real en el model alimentari i de distribució que ajudi a combatre l'emergència climàtica a la metròpoli de Barcelona; i 4) generar resiliència davant els riscos globals i les desigualtats socials, en uns moments en què hem pres més consciència que mai sobre la necessitat de ser resilients com a societat davant les amenaços imprevistes.

Les ciutats estan recuperant el seu paper en les polítiques alimentàries. En els darrers anys, Barcelona i altres ciutats del món han començat a desenvolupar polítiques en aquest sentit. En aquest mes, l’Ajuntament de Barcelona va elaborar la seva primera Estratègia de Política Alimentària (2019-2021) i des del Pla Estratègic Metropolità de Barcelona es impulsar durant el darrer any un procés on han participat més de 300 actors del sector alimentari per configurar la Carta Alimentària de la Regió Metropolità de Barcelona. Aquesta Carta Alimentària constitueix un instrument que ha de servir per impulsar i coordinar el desenvolupament de polítiques alimentàries en clau de regió metropolità.

Per obtenir més informació sobre Barcelona World Sustainable Capital 2021, visiteu alimentaciionsostenible.barcelona/ca.
The article is based on contributions from Barcelona Culinary Hub, a member of the TMC Business Leadership and Innovation Council and a sponsor of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean.

Like many chefs, Xavier Pellicer was forced to close his restaurant for part of 2020 because of the pandemic. The prolific Michelin-starred owner of Restaurante Xavier Pellicer in Barcelona, Spain, did not sit idle, however, and used the time to develop a curriculum for the Barcelona Culinary Hub (BCH). The course, titled Gastro Solution: Hazte Healthy (“get healthy”), is a formation on healthy cooking and the veggie world. It will launch in April as a virtual course, followed by an in-person one in 2022.

As the imperative to move menus in a more plant-forward direction continues to grow, Pellicer’s course will aim at increasing students’ holistic understanding of vegetables, from growing practices to flavor profiles.

“I’m just trying to give them a different focus of how a chef thinks about vegetables,” he said. “My vision of that is that I apply my experience. I take my knowledge of biodynamic, ecology, Ayurveda, nutrition, and build a course with a difference sense of how you can understand vegetables—how you can understand or feel what a vegetable feels.”

While this is the first course that Pellicer has developed in his career and he does not consider himself a teacher in the traditional meaning of the word, he accepted the challenge because he always relishes teaching similar principles to his cooks. His approach to curriculum development followed what he is used to explaining in the kitchen.

Pellicer’s restaurant menu offers a unique approach to making vegetables the star of the plate. The left side of the menu, which changes seasonally, is organized by vegetables—say, cauliflower, leek, or butternut squash. Under each listed vegetable appear three options: a vegan dish, a vegetarian one, and one with animal protein. For example, if fancying root vegetables, options are Celery Masala, Medjoul Dates; Glazed Jerusalem Artichokes, Marinated Egg Yolk, Chanterelles; or Tall Tender Turnips, Puigcerda Pears, Chicken Wings. The right side of the menu offers a few more traditional animal protein preparations.

A tasting menu with even more vegetable-centric creations is also available. Eighty-five percent of all products in the restaurants, including wines and cleaning supplies, are organic. He is also working on eliminating plastic containers and film.

“It’s a step-by-step approach,” Pellicer said. “The biggest challenge is to combine suppliers, seasonal products, the team, me, my wife, the restaurant, the energy—when you can put everything together like a sauté and it works, it’s magical. But it’s not easy.”

Hazte Healthy will consist of three four-week modules: The Vegetal World; Techniques and Preparations; and Healthy Models. Pellicer will teach some of the classes himself. He is also approaching other experts who will talk about Ayurvedic principles, biodynamic agriculture, or wine.

The course, which is part of Barcelona Culinary Hub’s master’s degree in gastronomic products, will last three months, with weekly videoconference classes that will include presentations and demonstrations. Its target audience includes students and professionals of the hospitality and restaurant world.

“It’s not about learning how to cook a vegetable,” Pellicer said. “I prefer to talk about the seasons, the earth, the sustainability.”

Pellicer explained that when he attended culinary school, his training centered around Escoffier and nouvelle cuisine, which was appropriate at the time but does not reflect today’s world. “People have to take conscience of not just cooking and techniques,” he added. “My idea is to be more open minded about how people can understand how vegetables are created, the vital energy they have inside, how we can consider them alive.”

Pellicer adopted this cooking philosophy in 2012. In addition to this new course, he will share it broadly in a book to be published by Planeta in February. He also continues to learn himself, and spend time in 2020 working with a nutritionist.

Teaching also offers Pellicer a way of ensuring that more restaurants can open with approaches similar to his without having to expand himself—something he is not keen on doing because so much of his cuisine is rooted in how he interprets the land and products of Barcelona, he explained. Understanding how to create that for themselves will be a core learning for the students of the Hazte Healthy course. And Pellicer’s message to his future students? To look who they are rather than worry about who others want them to be.

“We are not doing this job to be popular or be in the press,” Pellicer said. “The best message is what you are every day, how you put your feelings inside the food and how people are eating and digesting. When you focus your energy on being the most important, the world’s best, etc. you are not on the right path. You are losing something.”

For more information, visit www.barcelonaculinaryhub.com.
Ikaria isn’t a destination, it’s our destiny. That’s what we Ikarians say to one another after a couple of glasses of potent wine, as a confirmation of our belonging to what is, for all intents and purposes, a tribe.

And with good reason. Ikaria and its way of life fly in the face of all the conventional wisdom we’ve been inured to in the greater West. Punctuality as a virtue doesn’t exist, efficiency is a four-letter word; anxiety, hassles and watches have little place in the local culture and there’s even a saying to that effect. It’s often “late-thirty,” when someone asks you the time. A shopping stop, say, at the local bakery or Women’s Cooperative in my village has as much to do with saying hi and sharing or looking for village news as it does with waiting for those first hot loaves to emerge from an ancient wood-burning oven or picking up a slice of wild fennel pie, a local treat. People on this island embrace serendipity and let the natural rhythms of the seasons set their rather loose routines, many of which are connected to the production of food, their own food, from their own home gardens, groves and vineyards.

Ikaria is a poor place, but people here don’t lack for anything.
The island, a Blue Zone renowned for the longevity of its serendipitous inhabitants, is still a living example of the Mediterranean Diet. I would neither be the cook I am, nor understand the value and flavor of real food if I hadn't spent the summers of my formative years and months out of every year as an adult on the island. Everything related to health, diet, sustainability, seasonality, local and nose-to-tail eating, waste-free living and more, every newly coined catchphrase that trends in food conversations all over the West, in Ikaria is alive and well, just part of the tapestry of daily life. For me, the island, my spiritual and ancestral home, has been one of the greatest teachers of my life. My experience of food there shaped me as a cook and cooking teacher.

Good food begins in the field, and I learned that lesson firsthand as a young girl experiencing something as simple as my first real tomato. It was drizzled with olive oil squeezed from the fruit of the tree providing us shade in my aunt's garden, flavored with grey, coarse salt she had scraped off the rocks herself, and accompanied by slow meandering conversation, part inquisition, part philosophy, part gossip. A simple, slow touch in a natural setting, rooted in the freshest possible ingredients and the simplest possible preparation, prepared by the human art of conversation, without any stress to puncture the perfection of the moment.

Real food, in season, mostly plants, simply prepared... and shared. That is the Ikarian “longevity” diet in a nutshell, and it is essentially a paradigm of the Mediterranean Diet, adapted to the particulars of life and land on this historically poor and isolated island. Ikarians are ten times more likely to live to 100 than Americans on this historically poor and isolated island. Ikarians who are now in their 90s and more grew up on a diet impressive not so much for what it included as for what it didn’t include. The dearth of food, namely animal protein, rather than its plenteitude defined the diet here up until very recently.

Olive oil, of course, is a cornerstone of the diet and most islanders produce their own. It flows copiously over every inch of good soil until very recently. A diet impressive not so much for what it included as for what it didn’t include. The dearth of food, namely animal protein, rather than its plenteitude defined the diet here up until very recently.

Wild and foraged foods always played—and still do—a seminal role in the daily diet and the search for them provides both the premise for a social outing as well as the opportunity for low-stress natural exercise. There is a lot of wild plant life on the island so ever season provides its gifts: blackberries, wild strawberries, arbutus berries, countless varieties of wild mushrooms, dozens of edible wild greens and herbs, fruit from wild trees, among them pears and apples, tender vegetable-like wild asparagus and thorny wild artichokes, and lots more. Fish and game are sources of protein, but so is goat, the most prevalent and traditional meat on the island. Beans and pulses—to this day, wild lupines and vetches grow everywhere—are important and many people still follow the religious calendar, and so turn to legumes as a viable source of plant protein when going off animal products. Two ancient sweeteners are still in use and produced here, petitmeze, or grape molasses, and raw honey, for which Ikaria is famous, mostly because there is almost no industrial farming, so the honey is naturally organic. Dairy is mostly from goat, and goat’s milk is still the beverage of choice that Ikarian mothers give to their children; a goat’s milk cheese called kathoura is the local specialty.

From my perspective as a professional cook, what I find most fascinating is the enormous variety of simple dishes local cooks devise from their simple, local ingredients. Greens, for example, could be a raw or boiled salad, the filling for a pie, the stuffing for a pancake, the protagonist in a frissot, the leaves for rolling up with rice (dolmades), the stuff of pickles, hence a meze, and so much more. Zucchini, which is an island favorite and grows rampantly in the summer, becomes mock leeked, crisped chips, grated savory pie filling, receptacles for myriad stuffings, chunks braised in a stew and the list goes on. I’ve always been impressed by the ingenuity of simple cooks.

While the diet has definitely changed, it remains to be seen whether the next generations will live up to the island’s longevity chart. The lifestyle has changed little since I first stepped foot on Ikaria almost 70 years ago. There is always time for life. Even the elderly, if they live alone, and many do, are not tormented by the sense of alienation that pervades life in big urban areas. A stroll to the village café is all it takes to find a friend or compatriot, shoot the breeze, and enjoy the timeless pleasure of a simple snack in the shade of some big old tree.

Essentially, the diet and way of life here are what they were throughout the Mediterranean half a century ago, culled to what is locally available. Add to that the social aspects of Ikarian culture and what you get is the ultimate way to eat and live, nourishing both body and soul, in which all that can be returned to nature, in compost and animal feed, is a perfect ecosystem and a great example we can carry over into our own lives wherever that may be.
Spicy Black-Eyed Peas and Greens with Smoked Herring

**Pikantika Mavromatika me Horta kai Renga**

*Makes 4 to 6 servings*

Adapted from *Ikaria: Lessons on Food, Life and Longevity from the Greek Island Where People Forget to Die* by Diane Kochilas (Rodale)

Smoked herring, although not native to the Aegean, always seemed to be on hand in the larders and pantries of Ikarian cooks a generation or two ago. It was cheap and easy to keep and it was the classic poor-man’s mezze, especially for ouzo, all over Greece. There are a handful of recipes that call for smoked herring in the old island repertoire. This one is robust and spicy; Ikarian cooks often throw a hot pepper or two into bean stews and pastes.

**Ingredients**
- 1 pound (454 g) dried black-eyed peas, rinsed
- 2 large red onions, finely chopped
- 3 to 4 fresh or dried chile peppers
- 2 pounds/1 kg collard greens or kale, trimmed and coarsely chopped
- 1 cup extra virgin Greek olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 leeks, trimmed, washed well, and chopped
- 3 red onions, chopped
- 1 fennel bulb, chopped
- 1½ pounds (680 g) mixed sweet greens (any combination of spinach, sweet sorrel, sweet dandelion, Swiss chard, chervil)

**Instructions**

1. Place the black-eyed peas in a large pot with ample cold water and bring to a boil. Remove, drain, and return to the pot with enough fresh water to cover by 1 inch / 2.5 cm. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook until the black-eyed peas are tender but al dente and the liquid has reduced by at least half, about 30 minutes.

2. Add the onions, chile, leeks, and salt and peppers to taste. Cover and cook until all the vegetables are tender and there is almost no liquid left in the pot, another 30 minutes or so.

3. Remove from the heat to cool slightly, then mix in the remaining ½ cup olive oil. Serve either with the fish on top or on the side.

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**Ikaria’s Longevity Greens Phyllo Rolls**

**Kariotika Pitarakia tis Makrozoias**

*Makes 3 to 4 pieces*

Adapted from *My Greek Table* by Diane Kochilas (Rodale)

These pies are one of the most beloved dishes on Ikaria, the Blue Zone island renowned for the longevity of its inhabitants. They are usually made with homemade phyllo, which is time-consuming to prepare, cut, and shape. Working with commercial phyllo makes it easy for anyone to assemble these. You can prepare them freeze them, and bake them off straight out of the freezer without defrosting them first.

**Ingredients**
- ⅔ cup (160 ml) extra virgin Greek olive oil, plus more as needed
- ⅓ pounds (606 g) mixed sweet greens (any combination of spinach, sweet sorrel, sweet dandelion, Swiss chard, chervil)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper as needed
- 2 fennel bulbs, chopped
- 3 red onions, chopped
- 2 leeks, trimmed, washed well, and chopped
- 4 scallions, chopped
- 2 large carrots, grated, or 1½ cups (165 g) grated pumpkin or butternut squash (see Note)
- ⅛ cups (75 g) mixed chopped fresh herbs (any combination of mint, parsley, oregano, marjoram, savory, dill, fennel; fondi)
- 1 pound (450 g) commercial phyllo, at room temperature

**Instructions**

1. Preheat the oven to 350ºF (175ºC). Lightly oil two baking sheets. Place a heaping teaspoon of the filling in the center bottom end of the double strip, about ½ inch (1.5 cm) wide, as desired.

2. Brush the surface of each cylinder with a little olive oil. Bake for about 20 minutes. Remove from the oven, let cool slightly, and serve.

Note: If using grated pumpkin or butternut squash, place it in a colander and salt it lightly. Knead it in the colander, squeezing out as much water as possible. Let stand for 2 hours. You can opt to drain it even further by transferring it to a piece of cheesecloth and wringing out all the excess liquid.

Variation: Instead of rolling them, shape the pitarakia into triangles. Place one strip of phyllo on top of another, oiling both as above. Place a heaping teaspoon of the filling in the center bottom end of the double strip, about ½ inch (1.5 cm) from the edge. Take the right- or left-hand corner, whichever suits you more comfortably, and bring it up to the opposite side to form a triangle. Fold over the width, then repeat in the opposite direction, continuing this way until you reach the top edge, the same way one folds a flag. Place the triangles—or triangles, if you’re making the variation—well and freeze them, then bake them off directly from the freezer.

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Diane Kochilas is the host of *My Greek Table* on PBS and the award-winning author of many books on Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, including *Ikaria: Lessons on Food, Life & Longevity from the Greek Island Where People Forget to Die*. She runs the glorious Greek Cooking School on Ikaria every spring, summer and fall. She is a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council. Visit her at www.dianekochilas.com.
IZMIR is the third biggest city of Turkey. Over the centuries, the diversifying contributions of Levantine, Cretan, Greek, and Sephardic Anatolian cultures shaped it, as did the cultures of immigrants who arrived after the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, mainly from Crete and Thessalonica due to the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population.

The Greeks who came to İzmir couldn’t bring any material belongings with them. But their culture, traditions, and culinary heritage influenced and shaped the culture of the city and of the whole Aegean region.

This integrated cuisine, now called “migrant cuisine,” influenced many Turkish chefs, including the renowned Aylin Yazıcıoğlu, chef-owner of Alancha in Istanbul, a gastronomic Turkish restaurant inspired by Aegean culture and heritage. He shared his interpretation of Sinkonta, a pumpkin dish popular in the fall.

**Sinkonta by Aylin Yazıcıoğlu**

6-7 yellow onions
50 ml olive oil
1 tablespoon tomato paste
Ground green pepper
Salt
1/2 bunch dill, chopped
Juice of 1/2 lime
2 butternut squashes or pumpkins, peeled, seeded, and cut in thin slices

1. Preheat the oven to 170°C.
2. Slice the onions and sweat them with olive oil over medium heat. Don’t let them caramelize too much. Add the tomato paste and cook thoroughly. Finish with green pepper and salt and let cool. Stir in the chopped dill and lime juice.
3. In a baking or casserole dish, arrange a layer of pumpkin slices, then spread a thin layer of onion mixture over them. Continue arranging the pumpkins and onions in alternate layers until you have 6 or 7 layers. Bake for about 35 minutes until soft. Serve with Bergama Tulum Sauce and Walnut Taratour.

**Bergama Tulum Sauce**

50 gr vegetable stock
100 gr Bergama tulum cheese
Heat the stock and pour it over the cheese to melt it just before serving.

**Walnut Tatartour**

100 gr fresh walnuts
Boil the walnuts, then process them into a paste. Spoon over the bergama sauce when serving.

Chef’s Suggestion: Serve with a nettle salad and soka dressing. Chop soka peppers and combine them with nettles. For the dressing, dilute some fermented cream of soka peppers with fresh cream to taste.

**Sinkonta**

by Sırma Güven

Izmir is the third biggest city of Turkey. Over the centuries, the diversifying contributions of Levantine, Cretan, Greek, and Sephardic Anatolian cultures shaped it, as did the cultures of immigrants who arrived after the Greco-Turkish War of 1919-1922, mainly from Crete and Thessalonica due to the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Population.

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Chef’s Suggestion: Serve with a nettle salad and soka dressing. Chop soka peppers and combine them with nettles. For the dressing, dilute some fermented cream of soka peppers with fresh cream to taste.

Sırma Güven is the founder of The Kitchen Project and a member of the TMC Culinary and Food Studies Council. She is also the Izmir representative for Delice Network - Network of the Good Food Cities of the World and Meditea, to share and promote the culinary heritage of the Mediterranean countries.
The Mediterranean region is rich in preparations, cooking techniques, condiments, vegetables, aromatics, grains, greens, or dairy products that have been part of its traditional culinary repertoire for centuries, if not millennia. The flavor profiles might differ from country to country, but core ingredients—think tomatoes, eggplants, nuts, or spices and aromatics—appear whether one is cooking in Sevilla, Istanbul, Athens, or Marrakech. Passed from generation to generation, these traditions tend to be preserved at home first. This means that every professional chef knows them too, even if they give free reign to their creative spirits when it comes to riffing on these classics for their menu.

Za’atar, freekeh, labneh, mahleb, avgolemono, verjus, pomegranate molasses, haloumi, kasseri, piperrada, shakshouka, bagna cauda, harissa, dukkah—these classic seasoning agents, grains, souring agents, sweeteners, vegetable dishes, or condiments have become widely used around the world in recent years, further spreading Mediterranean flavors globally.

Mediterranean chef and cookbook author Joyce Goldstein—an icon herself—compiled a list of iconic foods of the plant-forward Mediterranean kitchen. You’ll find here a list of 75 of those, along with recipes and expanded descriptions for a selection of them. Unless otherwise indicated, Goldstein authored the material presented.

Beyond this list, we also want to hear from you: What do YOU consider an iconic, plant-forward food (raw or prepared ingredient, condiment, dish, etc.) of the Mediterranean? What have we missed for our must-know-about list? Share your thoughts with us for the 2021 edition of Tomorrow Tastes Mediterranean by sending us an email at hello@tmcmediterranean.org.
VEGETABLES

There is a big difference between overcooking and slow cooking. Throughout the Mediterranean, an established slow cooking tradition exists that renders vegetables truly tender and full of flavor. It means cooking or braising vegetables in a quantity of olive oil with minimal water. In Greece, this technique is called ladera (see sidebar). In Turkey it is called azetin yagi. And in Italy in the Veneto, it is called soft sage. Braising vegetables slowly in olive oil causes deeper flavors that, when the vegetables are quickly steamed or sautéed, are simply mono-dimensional. There is a time for crisp and crunchy and a time for vegetables cooked so that their inherent flavors are revealed through slow, gentle cooking.

Gratins, tarts (vegetable tarts without a crust), or sformati (unmolded vegetable flans) combine diverse textures and subtle flavors and make vegetables intriguing and delicious.

In the Mediterranean in years past, most vegetable dishes were cooked on stove top because few families had ovens at home. Today, along with the traditional braises, vegetables are also grilled or roasted in the oven.

By far the most extensive category of Mediterranean salads and small plates are those based on vegetables. As I consider an essential Mediterranean food what in Greece we call ladera. The cooking term ladera comes from the word ladi (oil in Greek), and basically describes sustainable vegetables cooked in plenty of olive oil with tomato, onion, and various herbs. Finely chopped onions are sautéed with garlic and herbs. Finely chopped tomatoes, herbs, and vegetables are served on their own plate, as a course. They are stars and treated with respect, not as an afterthought or just something of color to round out a plate of protein. They are not considered “sides.” They are as important as the fish or poultry that is placed on the table and served at the same time.

Some of the most popular vegetables of the Mediterranean are tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers. Many traditional seasonal vegetable braises combine eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes with zucchini or potatoes or okra. Spring braises will include artichoke, fresh fava, asparagus, and peas. Winter squashes, wild and cultivated greens are also used in abundance. Carrots, beets, and turnips are braised and used in salads.

—Antonia Trichopoulou, MD, PhD, president emeritus at the University of Athens School of Medicine, and member of the TMC Scientific and Technical Advisory Council.
**Shepherd’s Salad**

_Serves 6 to 8_

In the Mediterranean, the chopped salad format is quite popular. This one from Turkey bears a close resemblance to the Spanish chopped salad called pipirrana from Jaén. Gač is not traditional but I find that it adds liveliness. It also like to add mint to this salad along with the parsley for additional brightness. The Aleppo pepper adds mild buzz. And sumac, if you use it, will increase the tartness of the salad. If you should want to assemble this a few hours ahead of time, be aware that the tomatoes will continue to give off water. So either add them at the last minute or drain excess liquids from the assembled salad and re-season with dressing, salt, and pepper.

*Ingredients:*
- 3 large tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 or 3 small green peppers, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil or a bit more to taste
- ⅛ cup sherry vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced, optional
- 2 hard-cooked eggs
- 3 tablespoons chopped flat leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup diced ham
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon fresh oregano
- 1 teaspoon sumac, optional
- 1 teaspoon paprika, unsmoked, optional
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt, if necessary

*Instructions:*
1. Drain the tomatoes in a colander for 20 minutes so that they give off excess water.
2. Combine the tomatoes, peppers, and onion in a bowl. Add the garlic, salt, parsley and mix.
3. Cut the eggs in half and remove the yolks to a small bowl. Coarsely chop the whites and add them to the salad bowl. Mash the egg yolks and then beat them into the dressing. Toss the salad with this dressing. Garnish with chopped ham.

*Pipirrana Jaenense*

_Chopped Summer Salad from Jaen_

_Serves 6_

Only attempt this salad when the tomatoes are perfectly ripe and flavorful. In Valencia, a salad with the same name uses salt cod instead of ham, adds a dash of hot pepper and chopped romaine, and includes lemon juice in place of vinegar. In Murcia, a similar chopped salad garnished with tuna or sardines is called mojere or saor, because it is so delicious you want to soak bread in the juices. Pipirrana is not to be confused with piperađa, a Basque omelet with fried peppers, tomatoes and ham.

*Ingredients:*
- 2 pounds medium size tomatoes, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 or 3 small green peppers, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅛ cup sherry vinaigrette (recipe follows)
- ⅛ cup chopped mint
- ⅛ cup chopped parsley

*Instructions:*
1. Drain the tomatoes in a colander for 20 minutes so that they give off excess water.
2. Combine the tomatoes, peppers, and onion in a bowl. Add the garlic, salt, parsley and mix.
3. Cut the eggs in half and remove the yolks to a small bowl. Coarsely chop the whites and add them to the salad bowl. Mash the egg yolks and then beat them into the dressing. Toss the salad with this dressing. Garnish with chopped ham.

*Sherry Vinaigrette*

- ⅛ cup sherry vinegar
- ⅛ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced, optional
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

*Instructions:*
Whisk all together.

**Catalan Vegetable Stew**

_Makes about 8 cups_

Similar to ratatouille, samfaina is a chunky blend of onions, garlic, eggplant, peppers and tomatoes, plus zucchini, cooked down to a fragrant and unctuous stew. The exact proportions for this recipe are not crucial; a bit more tomato, a title less bell pepper will not throw this off. Some cooks add herbs at the end. None are essential to the basic recipe but you can add them if you like. Or you can custom season the mixture according to where you are going to use it. The salt will die after a while so you will need to reason when using this mixture.

*Ingredients:*
- 2 large onions, cut in ½-inch pieces
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 medium green or red peppers, cut in ½-inch pieces
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 cups chopped tomatoes
- 1 ½ cups diced ham
- 2 cups red wine
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup diced red bell peppers
- 1 cup diced zucchini
- 1 cup diced yellow or orange bell peppers
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 bay leaf, optional
- 1 teaspoon sugar

*Instructions:*
1. Warm the oil in a large sauté pan and add the onions. Cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Add garlic, pimenton if using, and cook for a few minutes. Add eggplant, zucchini, and peppers and cook 5 minutes longer, stirring often. Add tomatoes, herbs and cover the pan and simmer over low until tender, about 25 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Spread on grilled bread.
Harira
Moroccan Bean and Rice soup
Serves 8

1/2 pound beef shank meat cut into ½-inch pieces or 1/2 pound lamb, cut in ½-inch pieces
1 bay leaf
1/2 cup chickpeas or dried favas, soaked overnight
2 onions, chopped
2 branches celery, chopped
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
4 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 bunch cilantro, chopped, about 1/4 cup
1 bunch flat leafed parsley, chopped, about 1/4 cup
1/2 cup rice, orzo, pastina, or a handful of broken spaghetti
2 tablespoons saffron infusion (1/4 teaspoon dissolved in 2 tablespoons hot water)
2 tablespoons flour dissolved in 1/4 cup water, optional thickener
Salt and lots of freshly ground black pepper
Juice of 1 or 2 lemons

1. Put the meat and bay leaf in a pot and cover with slightly salted water. Bring to a boil, skim, cover and reduce heat. Simmer until meat is tender. Remove the meat from the pot and set aside. Discard the bay leaf.

2. Alternatively, you may sauté the meat in oil, then add water or use prepared meat or chicken broth.

3. To these cooking liquids, add the lentils, chickpeas, or dried favas, onions, celery, tomatoes, and half the coriander. Cover and simmer for at least a half hour. Add the reserved meat, simmer until all is tender. Adjust seasoning. Add the rice or pasta. Mix flour or cornstarch and water and add to soup. Add lemon juice to taste and chopped coriander.

Pisto Manchego/Pisto Murciano
Summer Vegetable Stew
Serves 6

Pisto has evolved from an ancient stew called alboronia, the Moorish name for eggplant. Over time vegetables from the new world made their entrance into the mix. La Mancha and Murcia are such close neighbors they share many recipes. In New Castile in addition to oregano, thyme, and a pinch of rosemary are added. Whether you call it pisto manchego, pisto murciano, or pisto castellano, all resemble ratatouille, and like ratatouille, pisto can be prepared well ahead of time. It is best served warm or at room temperature. If you like, a generous pinch of cumin can be added to reinvokes those Moorish roots.

2 large eggplants
2 pounds tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
3/4 cup olive oil
1 large onions, chopped
1 pound red and green bell peppers
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon dried oregano
2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts

1. Peel the eggplants and cut into 1 1/2 inch pieces. Place in a colander, sprinkle with salt and allow to drain for 1 hour.

2. Heat 1/4 cup olive oil in a large frying pan and sauté the onions until soft and translucent, about 8-10 minutes. Add the peppers and sauté until softened. In another large frying pan heat more oil. Dip in flour and fry in batches in olive oil until golden. Add the eggplant to the onions and peppers, then add the tomatoes, some salt, pepper and oregano and simmer over low heat until flavors are well blended and tomatoes have broken down into a sauce-like consistency. Garnish with toasted pine nuts.
WILD AND CULTIVATED GREENS

Arugula, also called rocket or roquette, goes back to the days of the early Romans. When young, the dark green leaves are small and tender, but as they mature the leaves become large and a bit tough. Arugula is a member of the mustard family, but less bitter than mustard greens. Its taste is more peppery, like watercress, and rather nutty. It may be paired and tempered with milder lettuces such as bibb or butter lettuce or matched for flavor with bitter Belgian endive or radicchio. It adds contrast to fruit based salads. Because it is bitter, the best dressings for arugula are citrus based or those enhanced with sweeter dressings like balsamic. Arugula sylvestra and roccella are the wild arugulas, their leaves are smaller and notched, spear-like and delicate in appearance. They may be sharper in flavor than the regular arugula but as they are so small they are less powerful that the full size leaves.

Belgian endive is in the chicory family. It grows in compact torpedo shaped heads about 4 inches long, with white leaves tipped with pale yellow green (although there is now a red variety of endive, with white leaves tipped with red). The leaves have a mild crunch and are bitter in taste. The leaves may be cut crosswise or lengthwise or left whole for salads. To use, cut off the end and separate the leaves. You will have to do this a few times as you get closer to the center of each head. Endive requires a dressing that coats and tempers the bitterness. It does well with creamy dressings, mustard based dressings which echo the bitterness in the leaves and require the mild and neutral additions such as mushrooms, truffle, nuts. Or sweeter citrus dressings paired with toasty nuts and may be serve raw or cooked. Crunchy when raw, it can handle a creamy dressing or one with citrus.

Cabbage can be a wonderful salad green. Freshly picked and small, the leaves can be mildly crunchy and only slightly bitter. Cabbage is great shredded in a salad and dressed with a creamy or mustardy dressing. It pairs well with grated carrots for a sweet contrast. Large leaves may be stuffed with rice or bulgur or meat and braised dolmata style.

Chicory is also known as curly endive or frisée. Its jagged spiny leaves are blanched with green tips, and it grows in open heads from a compact center. The leaves are a bit crunchier and assertive in flavor, bitter, but not as bitter as endive or radicchio. It needs a strong flavored vinaigrette, preferably red wine or sherry vinegar based.

Cress has bright green serrated leaves rather peppery in flavor. Upland cress has broader, darker green leaves and is also quite peppery.

Dandelion has long deeply notched leaves that tend to be slightly bitter. It is good raw or cooked. It needs a strong dressing and pairs well with chopped hard boiled eggs, and crisp bacon or pancetta.

Escarole is also in the chicory family; it consists of broad dark green flat leaves from compact heads, and has a bit of crunch. It can be eaten raw or cooked. It also needs a full flavored dressing, and is often used in soups.

Kale is part of the cabbage family of greens. There are mainly two kinds at our markets. The most readily available comes in loose bunches of ruffly leaves and is a medium green. (There are multifolium ornamental varieties but they are not typically used in Italian cooking.) Then there is Lacinato kale, also called “dimsonia” kale, because its green hue is so dark, the plant is called cavolo nero, black cabbage. The leaves are smaller than the looser ruffly kale and quite firm in texture. When cooking either of the kale varieties, discard the thick stems and the central ribs as they are rather tough. Cut the remaining green parts into strips and sauté in oil and then steam in liquid until tender. Or simply parboil the greens for use in many recipes such as ribollita, suppa di fave.

Mache is also known as lamb’s lettuce. It is mildly sweet with little round dark green leaves. Like leaf lettuces, it too needs a milder dressing.

In the Mediterranean, mixtures of wild greens are served both uncooked and cooked. Uncooked wild and mixed greens are called misticanza or mesclun. Horta are Greek mixed bitter greens cooked in boiling water, refreshed, dressed with lemon and olive oil. The name is related to hortera, orto which means gardens (horticulture = gardening.) They are served at room temperature. In Italy these are called erbe cotto.

Mustard greens are pungent and bitter with a bite. Baby mustard leaves are often part of a salad mix. The large leaves are good for cooking. Cut them into thin strips and sauté or steam.

Parslane has thick round leaves that resemble a Jade plant or succulent. They are tangy and juicy and add crunch to a salad. They are used in Middle Eastern salads and can handle a creamy dressing or one with citrus.

Radicchio, a red-hued chicory originally cultivated in the Veneto, is now grown in California in great quantity. The three styles are named after towns in the region. Treviso has red and white elongated leaves. (the green version is Pan di Zucchero.) Rossa di Verona or Palla rossa is a round compact head of red leaves veined with white, and Castelfranco comes in rosette-like heads but the leaves are white and pale gold with small veins of red and pale green. Radicchio is bitter and nutty in flavor and may be serve raw or cooked. Crunchy when raw, it needs dressings that are sweet or nutty. It grills well, too.

Sorrel has long oval leaves with a sour lemony taste. It is tender in texture but intense in taste so you may want to cut these leaves up a bit. When cooked it tends to turn brown in color and becomes very soft and slippery.

Spinach, with its tender green leaves mild in flavor with soft acidity, may be sautéed, used in soup, stews, salads, or braised.

Swiss chard can be green or rainbow. Its broad green leaves are earthy and mild in flavor. The stems should be cooked separately.
PANTRY ITEMS

POMEGRANATE MOLASSES

The pomegranate is an ancient fruit whose name means many seeded apple. It has a prominent place on the Rosh Hashanah table as a symbol of fertility to be wished for in the new year. To add color, crunch and sweet tart flavors to a dish, add pomegranate arils. These ruby red seeds may be sprinkled in fruit salads, and glisten atop bulgur pilafs and rice puddings. When some pomegranate juice is reduced, it becomes pomegranate molasses, which may be used in marinades and salad dressings. It is used in muhmama sauce to temper the heat and to balance the bitterness of the walnuts.

Bazergan

Syrian Bulgur and Nut Salad with Pomegranate Dressing

Series 6 to 8

Bazergan—literally “of the bazaar”—is a Syrian Jewish version of tabbouleh. Some recipes add chopped hazelnuts or pine nuts to the mix, but walnuts are typical. Coated onion is an additional dressing. The enrichment is dressed with tamarind paste or pomegranate molasses; both ingredients have a tart-sweet quality that, along with the lemon juice, accentuates the spices. Let the completed salad marinate for a few hours or as long as overnight for the flavors to develop. At serving time, adjust the seasoning with salt and the tartness with lemon juice if needed.

Although including fruit other than pomegranate seeds is not traditional, an added element of sweetness helps balance the salad. In winter you can use dried apples. When cherries are in season, pit and halve them and use them in place of the pomegranate seeds. They pair well with the walnuts and the pomegranate dressing.

PREPARED ARTICHOKES

Sott'olio, “in oil,” is a way of preserving vegetables in olive oil for storage in the refrigerator or pantry. For example see this classic preparation for spring artichokes, which make a good contrast in an antipasto assortment that includes rich cured meats or fish, and also may be added to farro or rice salads. Sott'olio, another form of preservation, calls for vinegar rather than lemon juice with the oil and is closer to pickling. As a result, the vegetables are tangier and somewhat difficult to pair with wine.

Carciofi sott'Olio

Preserved Artichokes

Series 6 to 8

1 lemon
6 large, 12 medium, or 24 small artichokes
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil or as needed
1 cup fresh lemon juice
6 cloves garlic, cut into slivers
3 bay leaves
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
.

1. In a bowl, soak the bulgur in warm salted water to cover (use about twice as much water as bulgur) until tender yet still slightly crunchy, as to 30 minutes. Pour into a sieve to drain off any excess water, then transfer to a large bowl.

2. In a small bowl, whisk together the cumin, coriander, allspice, cayenne, tomato paste and lemon juice, then whisk the dressing over the bulgur and toss to coat evenly. Fold in the fruit, fennel, walnuts, pine nuts, parsley, and mint, mixing well. Top with the pomegranate seeds and serve at room temperature with the romaine leaves for scooping.

DUKKAH

Dukkah is a nut and seed garnish for flat breads or cooked vegetables. Also spelled dukka, this Egyptian seasoning mixture, which is now used elsewhere in the Middle East as well, is typically made up of nuts, seeds, spices, and herbs that are toasted separately and then pounded together (the word dukkah comes from the Arabic word for “to pound”). Some mixtures include toasted chickpeas, as well. Dukkah is primarily eaten on bread that has first been dipped in olive oil and is also good on raw and cooked vegetables and rice. Here are two suggested combinations.

1/4 cup almonds or hazelnuts, toasted; skinned, and finely chopped
3 tablespoons coriander seeds, toasted and ground
1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, cut into very narrow strips (chiffonade)

Seeds of 1 pomegranate (optional) Romaine lettuce leaves for serving (optional)

1. In a bowl, soak the bulgur in warm salted water to cover (use about twice as much water as bulgur) until tender yet still slightly crunchy, as to 30 minutes. Pour into a sieve to drain off any excess water, then transfer to a large bowl.

2. In a small bowl, whisk together the cumin, coriander, allspice, cayenne, tomato paste and lemon juice, then whisk the dressing over the bulgur and toss to coat evenly. Fold in the fruit, fennel, walnuts, pine nuts, parsley, and mint, mixing well. Top with the pomegranate seeds and serve at room temperature with the romaine leaves for scooping.

VINEGAR

Balsamic vinegar, because it has been mellowed by years of aging in wood casks, is not highly acidic and therefore does not overpower a glass of fine wine. Here, the radicchio is blanched ahead of time, then put under the broiler or baked in a hot oven. Baste it with a little olive oil mixed with an aged balsamic vinegar. Or, dress the leaves with a warm pancetta vinaigrette, as they are served at Enoteca La Dispensa near Mantua in Lombardy. Sometimes the baked radicchio is wrapped in prosciutto and dressed with balsamic vinegar, which is the case at the Osteria del Vicolo Nuovo in Imola, in Emilia-Romagna, and at the Enoteca Francati in the wine region outside of Rome.

Radicchio all’Acceto Balsamico e Pancetta

Radicchio with Balsamic Vinegar and Pancetta

Series 4

3/4 cup pancetta
3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
4 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Optional Pancetta Vinaigrette:
5 ounces pancetta, sliced 1/4 thick, then cut crosswise into 1/4-inch-wide strips
1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 cup pancetta balsamic vinegar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/2 cup almonds or hazelnuts, toasted; skinned, and finely chopped
3 tablespoons coriander seeds, toasted and ground
1/2 cup sesame seeds, toasted;
1 teaspoon salt; 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper; and a pinch of paprika or nigella seeds (optional)
1. Preheat the broiler.

2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Drop the radicchio into the boiling water and cook for 2 minutes. Push them under the water, as they have a tendency to bounce up. Drain well and squeeze out excess moisture carefully. If they are large, cut them in half.

3. In a small cup, whisk together the olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

4. Place the radicchio on the broiler pan and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Brush with some of the olive oil and vinegar. Broil for 3 minutes, then turn and brush with more oil and vinegar and broil for 3 minutes longer. The radicchio should be golden and tender.

5. To make the vinaigrette, cook the pancetta in a small saucepan or sauté pan over medium heat until the pancetta has rendered its fat and is slightly crisp, about 5 minutes. Add the olive oil and vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Spoon this over the cooked radicchio. Serve hot.

Variation: You may bake rather than broil the radicchio. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Arrange the radicchio in an oiled baking dish, spoon on the oil and vinegar, and bake until tender, about 15 minutes. You may also wrap the radicchio in prosciutto and broil, basting with some of the vinaigrette from time to time.

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### PRESERVED LEMONS

A signature condiment in the North African kitchen, preserved lemons are unique in flavor and texture. Once you have prepared them, they must cure for four to six weeks before they can be used, so try to put up a new jar as soon as you see you are running low. While preserved lemons are traditionally used in tagines, you will also probably find ways to use them in dishes that are not North African. Their tart brininess will enliven vinaigrettes, fish stews, and vegetable and legume dishes

Keep in mind that with preserved lemons, you primarily are using the peel, in dice, or strips. Eureka and Lisbon lemons have thick peels so they are the best choice for preserving.

#### Preserved Lemons

**Makes 8-9 preserved lemons (about 3 to 4 per pint jar)**

- 8-9 juicy lemons (about 2 pounds total weight)
- About 1 1/4 cups kosher salt, or as needed
- Fresh lemon juice to cover, about 4 more lemons

1. Scrub the lemons well with a brush under running cold water. Place the lemons in a bowl, add water to cover, and let soak for a day, changing the water a few times. (If you are short on time, soak for at least a few hours.)

2. For ease of packing lemons into jars, use wide mouth pint jars. Most of us will use only 1 or 2 lemons at a time, so pint jars, rather than quart jars, are more practical as they take up less room in the refrigerator once opened.

3. Have ready a few sterilized pint canning jars. Drain the lemons and dry well. Using a sharp knife, cut each lemon lengthwise into quarters, stopping just short of the bottom. The cut lemon should resemble a tulip. Push a heaping tablespoon of kosher salt into the center of each lemon. Place a heaping tablespoon of salt at the bottom of each jar and pack the salted lemons tightly in the jars. With luck you will be able to fit three per jar. Pour lemon juice into each jar to cover the lemons. Seal the jars. There is no need for a boiling water bath as they do not need to vacuum seal.

4. Turn the jars occasionally for a few days, then store in a cool, dry place for at least 4 weeks before using. Unopened jars will keep for a year or a bit longer. The color of the lemons will fade over time. Once a jar has been opened, store it in the refrigerator, where it will keep for at least 4 months. If a white film forms on the lemons, just rinse it off. The lemons are still good.

5. To use the lemons, rinse briefly under running cool water and pat dry. Cut away and discard the pulp. Cut the peel as directed in individual recipes.
CONDIMENTS

MOROCCAN CHARMOULA

Charmoula (sometimes spelled chermoula) is a signature sauce in the Moroccan kitchen. Aromatic spices such as cumin, sweet paprika, and garlic are combined with chopped parsley, cilantro, and garlic in a base of olive oil with either lemon juice or vinegar as the acid component. There are many different versions of this traditional sauce. Some have sweet spices such as cinnamon and ginger, or the addition of saffron. Others have grated onion, or slivers of preserved lemon. It is most often used a marinade for fish, poultry, or lamb. It can be a finishing sauce and may be spiced over grilled fish or shellfish or stirred into fish soup for an herbal jolt. It is excellent on spooned grilled vegetables, bean salads, potato salads, grain salads, and couscous salads. Add it to mayonnaise to spread on a grilled tuna or chicken sandwich, with eggplants and peppers. For the acid factor, you may opt for lemon juice, but if the lemons are mild and greater acidity is desired to set off the spices, add some red wine vinegar.

Moroccan Charmoula

Makes about 2 cups

1/2 cup (or to taste) fresh lemon juice (or ¼ cup lemon juice and 1/4 cup wine vinegar)
6 cloves garlic, very finely minced
2 teaspoons sweet paprika or pimentón dulce
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 teaspoons ground toasted cumin
1 teaspoon black peppercorns, toasted and ground
2 teaspoons pimentón de la vera
1 jalapeño or 2 serrano chiles
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup chopped cilantro
1 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt

Peel of 1 preserved lemon, chopped

1. Pulse the spices, chiles, bell pepper and garlic in the food processor. Add lemon juice, oil and herbs and pulse quickly to combine. Fold in chopped preserved lemon peel. Drizzle in the oil. Season with salt.

Green Charmoula

This version uses less of the red spices and more green herbs and peppers.

1 1/2 tablespoons coriander seeds, toasted and ground
1 tablespoon cumin seeds, toasted and ground
1 tablespoon black peppercorns, toasted and ground
2 teaspoons pimentón de la vera
1 jalapeño or 2 serrano chiles
1 green bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 cup chopped cilantro
1 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt

Peel of 1 preserved lemon, chopped

1. To make Charmoula, mix the lemon juice, garlic, paprika, cayenne, and cumin in a mixing bowl until smooth. Whisk in the parsley, cilantro, and olive oil.
2. To make Charmoula Dressing, mix the lemon juice, garlic, paprika, cayenne, and cumin in a mixing bowl until smooth. Whisk in the parsley, cilantro, and olive oil.

If necessary, add more oil so that the vinaigrette is not too thick. Taste and add more lemon juice or vinegar if needed. Season with salt and pepper.

GRAINS AND LEGUMES

In the Mediterranean whole grains such as bulgur, freekeh, and barley, and farro are used in pilafs, salads, and soups.

FREEKEH

Freekeh is popular in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and, to a lesser degree, in Turkey and North Africa. It is green wheat that has been roasted and cracked. The wheat is harvested when the seeds are still soft, and the stalks are stacked and left to dry in the sun. The stacks are carefully set on fire to burn off only the chaff and straw, leaving behind the roasted kernels, which are then threshed and dried again in the sun. Sold both whole and cracked, freekeh is used in soups, pilafs, salads, and stuffing. It is easy to cook: allow a ratio of three parts water to one part wheat and start checking for doneness after 15 minutes if using cracked freekeh or after 45 minutes if using whole freekeh.

Fig Dolma with Freekeh

By Ana Sortun

Makes about 2 cups

1 lb lamb shoulder, boneless
2 teaspoons baharat
2 cups white wine or beer
2 tablespoons red pepper paste
1 onion, finely chopped
1 cup freekeh, cooked
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
2 tablespoons butter
1 teaspoon dried mint
Salt to taste
10 fresh figs
1/4 cup tomato vinaigrette

1. Sauté the onion with a pinch of baharat; cook it until soft and translucent. Stir in the freekeh, parsley, 1 cup of braising liquid, pomegranate molasses, butter, and dried mint. Season to taste with salt.
2. Fill each fig half with a tablespoon of the wheat mixture and a chunk of lamb. Warm the figs with the olive oil in an oven until hot. Garnish generously with finely ground pistachios and serve warm or at room temperature.

Chickpeas with Squid and Chorizo

Makes 8 servings

1 cup dried chickpeas, soaked overnight in the refrigerator
1 onion
6 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon salt
4 to 6 tablespoons sherry or red wine vinegar
2 lb squid, cleaned and pound
2 lb tomatoes, ripe, peeled, seeded, and chopped
2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

1. Drain the chickpeas and rinse them. Place them in a medium saucepan and cover with fresh, cold water. Add the onion, bay leaf, and garlic in a cheesecloth sachet and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for about 45 minutes. Add salt and continue to cook for another 15 to 20 minutes, or until done. Drain and discard the sachet. Transfer to a bowl and toss with ¼ cup of the tomato vinaigrette.
2. For the vinaigrette: Combine all the ingredients in a blender and pulse until smooth. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil and vinegar; season to taste.
For the squid: Pull the heads from their bodies and cut off the tentacles just above the eyes, push out the little round hard piece and discard. Set the tentacles aside. With the flat side of a knife, push down on the body of the squid to push out the intestines. Discard them and then reach into the cavity, pull out the inner bone, and discard. Scrape away the outer skin and wash the bodies well. Pat them dry and cut them into 1-inch rings. If the tentacles are large, cut them in half.

Bring a pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Drop in the squid and when the squid turn white, a matter of about a minute, drain immediately. Transfer to a bowl and toss with ½ cup of the vinaigrette, while they’re still warm; set aside.

Warm ¼ cup of vinaigrette in a small sauté pan. Meanwhile, in a wide sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil and add salt to taste. Stir in a few tablespoons of fruity extra virgin olive oil plus more for garnish. Grated Pecorino cheese, optional

1. Soak the fava beans in water overnight in the refrigerator. Drain and peel if necessary. Put the beans in a heavy soup kettle with 2 quarts cold water. Bring to a boil, add salt and garlic and reduce heat to low. Simmer uncovered until favas are very soft and can be mashed with a spoon in the pot, about 1 or 2 hours, depending upon the age of the favas. Add water if necessary while the beans are cooking and stir occasionally to prevent sticking or scorching. Stir in a few tablespoons of fruity olive oil and add salt to taste.

2. Meanwhile, in a wide sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat and cook the onions and garlic for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes, if using. Add the chopped greens and wilt them in water clinging to the leaves, or add about a cup of water to make enough steam to wilt them. Simmer over low heat until greens are tender, about 10 minutes. Season greens with salt and lots of freshly ground pepper. Drain any excess water.

3. To serve: Ladle fava puree into warm bowls, top with greens and a generous a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and grated cheese, if desired. Or spread the puree on toasted bread and top with greens. For long-term storage, sterilize a 1-quart canning jar and a two-part canning lid (self-sealing top and ring). Cook the artichokes for only 5 to 8 minutes. They should be barely translucent. Using tongs, transfer the artichokes to the sterilized jar and ladle the hot cooking liquid in to cover. Add additional olive oil as needed to cover the artichokes completely. Top the jar with the lid and screw on the metal ring. Note: The greens also can be boiled, drained well, and chopped, and only the onion and garlic sautéed. Hot pepper may be added to the cooked onions. You can also make this dish with white beans. It will not be the classic maccu, but it will be good! Joyce Goldstein is a consultant to the restaurant and food industries. For 12 years she was chef/owner of the ground-breaking Mediterranean restaurant Square One in San Francisco. A prolific and award-winning cookbook author, she wrote, among others, The Mediterranean Kitchen, Mediterranean: The Beautiful, and Sephardic Flavors: Jewish Cooking of the Mediterranean.
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