



The traditional greek diet and its impact on health

Traditional food preparation and cooking is an important part of Greece's cultural inheritance. This rich and unique heritage is recognized as an archetype of the healthy traditional Mediterranean diet, but is now under threat, due to changes in our lifestyle

OBJECTIVE

The project aims to study the impact of greek traditional foods on health.

A diet based on food complementarity

The study of traditional greek foods has revealed their nutritional properties and evidence has emerged on their role on the overall beneficial impact of this traditional diet on health. For example, it has been shown that many greek traditional foods contain high amounts of a variety of antioxidants. Moreover, the health benefits of the traditional Mediterranean dietary pattern rely on a balanced combination of traditional foods. It has been demonstrated that a greek weekly menu based on traditional foods provides the macronutrients and a wide range of micronutrients that meet the recommended daily allowances by the EC. Of note, the beneficial effects of the Mediterranean diet are expressed if the whole dietary pattern is taken into account and not the individual food groups. This supports the complementary role of the various traditional foods in the metabolic pathways.

Quality certification

The study also seeks to protect the terms 'traditional products' and 'traditional diet', for cultural, health and economic reasons and to prevent intentional or unintentional misuse. The current re-discovery of the Mediterranean diet, in restaurants and stores around the world sometimes has a negative impact: the development of low-quality product lines and imitations which can only be regulated by the introduction of effective legislation.

Expansion of the research activities of traditional foods in other cultures

The study of traditional foods in Greece has started in 1992, by the group of Antonia Trichopoulou at the WHO Collaborating Center of the Medical School, University of Athens and the Hellenic Health Foundation. Since 2005, this framework was integrated into two European Commission funded projects : EuroFIR (www.eurofir.net) and BaSeFood (<http://www.basfood-fp7.eu/>). Consequently, the framework developed in Greece has been utilized by 13 European and 6



Welcome to a Mediterranean Buffet.

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Black Sea Area countries, resulting in a unified method of systematically studying traditional foods in Europe and the Black Sea area.

Use of films to collect and promote culinary skills

Among the methods used in this project, video recording is a particularly important tool. Serving as valuable testimony of techniques, skills and production conditions for this cuisine, the videotapes ensure that recipes traditionally handed down by (mostly) women from generation to generation are not lost. Overtime, they will also serve to ensure the preparation of typical dishes.

THE PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT Greek Traditional Foods - since 2000: Under the leadership of the WHO Collaborating Center of the Dept. of Hygiene, Epidemiology and Medical Statistics of the University of Athens and the Hellenic Health Foundation, several Institutions and Small Sized Enterprises (SMEs) have contributed or collaborated for the implementation of the traditional food research. For detailed information please see the websites www.nut.uoa.gr and www.hhf-greece.gr.

