



# THE KEFI CLUB NEWSLETTER

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May 2007



The next meeting is 11.30 a.m. on Saturday 19th May 2007 at The Greek Orthodox Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Walsall. (Sun Street and Dale Street Walsall WS1 4AL).

Father John Nankivell will talk to us about the symbolism of the Orthodox Church.

Contact Les, The Club Treasurer, details at bottom of Newsletter.

## Grand BBQ – 22<sup>nd</sup> June

**B**illed in the programme as a Grand BBQ is the clubs June meeting. Commencing at the slightly earlier time of 7 p.m. As those members who have attended the BBQs in the past will know they are a must as we have always be blessed with good weather (that's blown it). It is our finale to the year with plenty of food, wine and beer all for the fantastic price of £3 members and £6 non-members. You will be notified of the location and how to get there closer to the time. See you there.



## Fish dish takes 1<sup>st</sup> prize



When food looks this good no wonder the judges had such a difficult job deciding on a winner. This was indeed the case for what seems to be our resident judges from the Hospitality Department of Worcester College of Technology Stephen Hewitt and Jackie Rogers. They were called upon to judge our cooking competition for the third year in succession to give an impartial judgement on the highly coveted 1<sup>st</sup> Prize. The competition was held on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March at our usual venue of Norton Parish Hall. As with previous competitions there were two classes, a savoury and a sweet. It was noticeable and commented on that this year there



seemed to be more sweet dishes than savoury. However, with 12 dishes of savoury to taste it was time for the judges to do there bit. Then it was our turn to sample and discuss ingredients and cooking methods before the same routine was carried out on the sweets. After which the judges awarded the prizes. The runner-up in the savoury category was Celia Canham with her very popular dish Stifado. The winning dish was Fish Plaki prepared by Bridget Mason congratulations again from us all. Now onto the sweets the runner-up with Amigdalota was Murray Briscoe and the winner was Sally Watts with Pasta Sokolatina a very yummy chocolate cake ideal for choco-holics and congratulations to you from us all. In fact all of those who took part should also be thanked for your efforts, yet again making such a splendid evening, which always proves popular with members well done! Recipes for the two dishes are given later in the Newsletter with the winner of the sweets and runner-up of savouries in the next edition.

## Easter Celebration – Red eggs galore



A change of location was the order of the day for our club meeting in April, held at Colwall Cricket Ground to celebrate Easter. But first it was down to business and the A.G.M. more on this later. Thanks to Lyndsay and Nick (who brought along the coloured eggs) members had the chance to play *tsougrisma*, which is the game of smashing the coloured eggs. The game involves two players. Each player holds a red egg, and one taps the end of her/his egg lightly against the end of the other player's egg. The goal is to crack the opponent's egg. When one end is cracked, the winner uses the same end of her/his egg to try to crack the other end of the opponent's egg. The player who successfully cracks the eggs of the other players is declared the winner and, it is said, will have good luck during the year. The word *tsougrisma* means "clinking together" or "clashing" in Greek. *Mayiritsa* which is soup made from the offal of the lamb was prepared for members to try, in this version only liver was used in its making. As is also traditional at this time there was plenty of lamb and salads. To finish there was traditional Easter breads to try.

## AGM Points

I will quickly run through the main points as most of the members were present but for those who were not. Les the treasurer ran through the statement of accounts. Subscription was debated and then a vote was taken and carried that the annual subscription will be raised to £10. Nick the club secretary ran through next years programme yet to be finalised as ideas for inclusion in the programme require looking into. As there were no new takers for the committee posts, the committee are to carry on for another year and with a vote of thanks for work done up until now.

## News reports

### Heritage seed varieties are available at April festivals

**There's a growing interest in the cultivation of food from ancient sources**

By Yvette Varvaessou - Kathimerini English Edition, 09/03/07

**V**egetable seedlings from heritage seed varieties will be available to the public at a festival on the island of Aegina on Sunday, April 1, as part of a program by the Association of Active Citizens of Aegina to promote healthier food.

The association was prompted by the work done by the Peliti alternative community in northern Greece that collects heritage seed varieties from around the country and has published a catalog of sources.

"A group of us got together and acquired seeds from producers listed in the catalog. We started growing them

along with other seeds we collected ourselves," said Aris Pavlos.

The festival is being held in Aegina's port at the Pyrgos tou Markellou beginning at 11 a.m. Apart from plants, information on planting with an emphasis on drought-tolerant plants adapted to conditions in Greece will also be available.

"The idea is to develop a better relationship with the food we eat," said Pavlos. "Even if we grow just a few things ourselves, we appreciate the farmers more."

The festival includes a film screening, games for children and a talk by Panayiotis Sainatoudis, the coordinator of Peliti.



"Local varieties are a living part of our culture. Just as we have a duty to preserve the Acropolis, we have a duty to preserve our local food varieties," said Sainatoudis at a presentation in Athens last week.

"Food sold in most stores these days is uniform, created in laboratories mainly for economic reasons. In nature, there is no uniformity, but variety," he continued. "The seeds that have come down to us through the ages have been through thousands of tests – strong winds, diseases, wars, all kinds of wear and tear – which have made them resistant to disease and weather conditions. But today in farming there is a growing genetic uniformity. Only six varieties of corn are cultivated in the world today. That means that if one

of them is affected by disease, a country's entire crop could be destroyed. Using local varieties prevents the spread of epidemics."

Some of the heritage varieties still grown in parts of Greece have been cultivated for some 8,000 years. Heritage wheat includes *Triticum monococcum* (commonly known as Einkorn wheat, in Greece as kaploutzas), one of the first cultivated by humans and probably the ancestor of all other wheat varieties cultivated today, and *Triticum aestivum*, seeds of which were found by archaeologists in the ruined palace of Knossos.

"There are varieties of vegetables such as beans, corn and potatoes that have adapted to conditions in Greece and can now be called local varieties, even if they were originally from somewhere else," said Sainatoudis.

Peliti's catalog also includes a list of livestock breeders who raise traditional breeds of animals, such as the short-horned cattle (*Bos brachyceros*) that have been bred in Greece for 10,000 years.

According to Dimitris Dimou, a livestock breeder in Trikala,

only two breeds of the original five that were raised in Greece until about 1960 are still being bred – the short-horned cattle, of which he estimates there are about 2,000, and the Katerini breed of Greek steppe cattle (*Bos primigenius*) of which he has 118 of the total 180 still in Greece.

"One million cattle have disappeared from the Greek countryside in the last 40 years," Dimou said. "Cattle breeds have been introduced that cannot adapt to the Greek environment but need to be fed. The traditional breeds were able to exploit the Greece's poor pastureland; they adapted. These new breeds might be bigger but they are not as productive."

Over the past 10 years Dimou, who also breeds pigs, has taken part in research by universities to find and study native breeds of farm animals. He has been awarded by the Slow Food organization for his work in preserving the agricultural biodiversity of farm animals. Unfortunately, his meat is not available in the stores – he sells straight to customers.

#### **Part of the solution**

Sainatoudis believes that all would not be lost if people began supporting local initiatives, of which the Aegina association is just one example.

"We are living in a time in which

there is what could be called a world 'dictatorship' in which a few companies are in a way trying to control the world population," he said. "Whoever controls food supplies wields great political and economic power... We may feel helpless, but if we realize that we bear some responsibility for what is happening, then we also can be part of the solution."

The first thing, he says, is to have a positive attitude. "When we focus on things that are positive these will increase in number," he said. "Even by starting one's own herb garden on a balcony or windowsill, one discovers other like-minded people and realizes that one is not alone. Another thing that we should all try to do is buy food that has been grown as close as possible to where we live."

Heritage seed varieties of fruit and vegetables collected by volunteers from the Peliti alternative community on missions throughout the country will also be available to the public at Peliti's annual festival, to be held on Saturday, April 14, at the Monastery of Timios Prodromos at Anatoli, Kissavos, in the prefecture of Larissa. This is Peliti's seventh annual event that has become a fixture for everyone interested in preserving quality food in the face of the growing onslaught of globalized food varieties.

## **CHILDREN IN CRETE EAT IDEAL DIET TO BEAT ALLERGIES**



The classic Mediterranean diet which is rich in fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts, whole grain foods, beans and olive oil appears to protect children from allergies including asthma and allergic rhinitis which causes a runny nose.

A study conducted with 700 rural children on the Greek island of Crete found that about 80 per cent ate two or more fruits every day and nearly 70 per cent ate two or more portions of vegetables. Cretans traditionally enjoy the perfect Mediterranean diet and eat high quantities of locally grown fruit and vegetables.

[by Ceila Hall Medical editor The Daily Telegraph 5/4/07]

## EAU DE BC: the oldest perfume in the world. [The Daily Telegraph, Malcolm Moore 21/3/07]

The world's oldest perfumes have been found on Cyprus by a team of archaeologists. The perfumes were scented with extracts of lavender, bay, rosemary, pine or coriander and kept in tiny translucent alabaster bottles. The remaining traces found in Pyrgos on the south of the island, are more than 4,000 years old. ...." We were astonished at how big the place was", said Maria Rosa Belgiorno, the leader of the Italian archaeological team. .... The finds are now on display at the Capitoline Museum in Rome. In addition four of the perfumes have been recreated from residues found at the sites.



## Winning Recipes

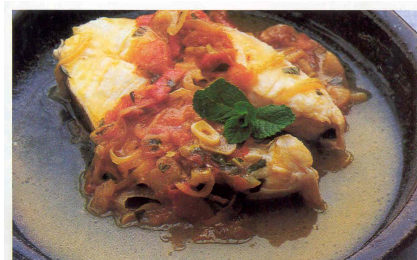
### Fish Plaki

Generally, fish is treated very simply in Greece, but this recipe is a little more involved, baking the fish with onions, tomatoes and fresh herbs.

Serves 6

#### INGREDIENTS

300 ml / 1 pint / 1¼ cups olive oil, 2 onions, thinly sliced  
3 large well-flavoured tomatoes, roughly chopped  
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced  
5 ml / 1tsp sugar  
5 ml / 1tsp chopped fresh dill  
5 ml / 1tsp chopped fresh mint  
5 ml / 1tsp chopped fresh celery leaves  
15 ml / 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley  
6 firm white fish steaks  
juice of 1 lemon  
salt and freshly ground black pepper  
extra dill, mint or parsley, to garnish



- 1 Heat the oil in a large saute pan or flameproof dish.

Add the onions and cook until pale golden.

Add the tomatoes, garlic, sugar, dill, mint, celery leaves and parsley with 300 ml / ½ pint/ 1¼ cups water.

Season with salt and pepper, then simmer, uncovered, for 25 minutes, until the liquid has reduced by one-third.

- 2 Add the fish and cook gently for 10-12 minutes, until just cooked.

Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice.

Cover and stand for about 20 minutes.

Arrange in a dish and spoon the sauce over.

Garnish with herbs and serve warm or cold

We're on the web. [www.kefi-club.org.uk](http://www.kefi-club.org.uk)

## AMIGDALOTA [Murray Biscoe March 2007]

### Ingredients

480g blanching almonds  
165g castor sugar  
80g semolina (approx)  
3 egg whites - lightly beaten  
2 tbs orange flower water  
35 cloves  
Icing sugar



### Procedure

1. Process nuts until fine (*I actually ground up some flaked almonds--much cheaper and easier to process*). Transfer ground nuts to a mixing bowl. Stir in castor sugar, semolina, egg whites and orange flower, water. Mix into a smooth, stiff paste -adding a little extra semolina if paste is too sticky
2. Form level teaspoonfuls of the almond paste mixture into little "pear" shapes. Insert a clove into top of each "pear". Place on lightly greased oven trays and Bake in a moderate oven (175 degrees- centigrade) for about 12 - 15minutes, or until lightly coloured.
3. Transfer almond "pears" onto a shallow tray covered with greaseproof paper. Dust heavily with sifted icing sugar; whilst still warm

This recipe makes 30 - 35 pears. I used half quantities and Rose water instead of Orange water, it worked well!

- \* "Pears" can be made up to a month ahead, if stored in an airtight container
- \* Not suitable for microwaving
- \* Not suitable for freezing.

## Future Events from other Local Greek Clubs

### The Anglo Hellenic Club

**24 MAY – Delos & Delphi – John Bromhead**

**28 JUNE – AGM & QUIZ**

**21 JULY - Evening BBQ Supper Party – Hosted by Kevin & Eleni Carroll**

### The Birmingham Club

Our next meeting is on **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007**. When Dr Ioannis Tzortzis will talk on 'Reforms in the Greek Higher Education System' in the Staff Common Room, First Floor, Faculty of Arts, University of Birmingham

Next edition out  
Jul 2007

## The Delights of Learning Modern Greek

“Greek!” people say when they discover that I attend a Greek evening class every week; then, “That must be really hard to learn”. As the well-worn phrase “It’s all Greek to me!” suggests, there is a perception that Greek is much more difficult to learn than other European languages (which themselves are considered difficult enough by most people, the British not being noted for their ability to speak foreign languages).

The first reason for this is undoubtedly the alphabet, which is an immediate barrier to understanding. Then there is the grammar, which is much more complicated than in English: nouns and adjectives have one of three genders (even worse than the two found in French or Spanish) and three cases with different endings for singular and plural; verbs also have lots of different endings, plus a commonly used subjunctive. Also the vocabulary, apart from words such as psychology which have come into English directly from Greek, is largely unrelated to English so even if you have got to grips with the alphabet and can read the words you probably won’t know what they mean. So why does anyone choose to learn such a seemingly difficult language?

Well, in the first place Greek is not as hard as it appears at first, and the alphabet especially is a superficial problem which is easily overcome. It looks very strange at first, especially the lower case letters, but really does not take long to learn. Of the 24 letters (see! already easier than English!), nine of the capitals look and sound like English letters, five look like English letters but are pronounced differently and only ten are not found in the English alphabet and have to be learnt from scratch. It really does not take long to learn the small versions as well – if you have done maths, some of them will already be familiar - then you can decipher street signs, shop names etc. My children used to enjoy doing this on holidays in Greece.

The grammar also is not in fact too difficult, as long as you are prepared to sit and learn the endings. (While you are doing this, you can enjoy

the fact that you are learning Modern rather than Ancient Greek, whose complexities include five case endings, an optative mood as well as a subjunctive, and an array of impossibly irregular verbs that I can’t believe anyone ever mastered completely. Oh, and in some circumstances a dual as well as singular and plural.) The concept of gender in language, while alien to English, will be familiar to most people from languages learnt at school and does not really cause many problems.

Even if Greek is not as hard as commonly thought, though, why go to the bother of learning it when you could be sitting at home with your feet up? Obviously most people choose to do so because they go to Greece on holiday and want to be able to communicate while they are there. If nothing else, it is useful to be able to read sign posts, street names, bus destinations and so on; true, these are often written in the English alphabet as well but this is not always particularly helpful as the transliteration can be rather confusing – many years ago while driving through Greece with friends I would have got very lost if I had relied on them for directions because, unsurprisingly, they did not realise that Thive meant Thebes. It is also very worthwhile learning to speak even just a few words of Greek such as please, thank you and hello, as people appreciate that you have made the effort. If you persevere and can manage a little more than this, you will find that people are very responsive and ready to answer your questions and ask you some about yourself. If you want to explore off the beaten track at all, it is definitely helpful to be able to ask directions (and to understand the answers!). Unless you plan to spend all your time around your hotel, some knowledge of Greek will make your holiday more enjoyable and interesting. As with any language, learning to speak it fluently requires a lot of practice, ideally from time spent in Greece where you are hearing the language all the time; but, as most of us do not have the opportunity to do this for more than a short time each year, attending classes is a good way to learn some Greek at least, even if other people do question your sanity!

**By Judith Bates                      May 2007**

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