

**Gourmet Club Menu**  
**Winter 2022**  
**A Taste of Greek Cuisine**

**Appetizers**

The Ultimate Mediterranean Mezze Platter

**Salad & Soup**

Traditional Greek Salad

Fasolada - Greek Bean Soup

**Main Course**

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Toasted Orzo with Parmesan and Sundried Tomatoes

**Dessert**

Greek Orange Honey Cake with Pistachios

Melomakarona Cookies

## Appetizer

### The Ultimate Mediterranean Mezze Platter

An easy and healthy Mediterranean mezze platter is a sure and healthy way to please a crowd!

Serves 12

Ingredients:

- 2 baby eggplants, sliced lengthwise (½" or so in width)
- Salt
- Olive oil
- Traditional Creamy Hummus or 10-oz tub quality store-bought alternative
- Roasted Red Pepper Hummus or 10-oz tub quality store-bought alternative
- ½ bell pepper, any color, cored
- Homemade Greek Tzatziki or quality store-bought tzatziki
- 6 Campari tomatoes, quartered
- 6 Persian (baby) cucumbers, sliced into spears
- Pitted Kalamata olives
- 1 15-oz can good quality marinated artichoke hearts
- 6 oz Greek feta cheese, cubed (not crumbled) ideally made with sheep milk
- 6 oz baby mozzarella cheese balls
- 3 oz prosciutto di parma
- 6 California fresh figs, halved (substituent: seedless grapes)
- 1 tsp sumac
- Pita bread or your choice of rustic European bread for serving

Instructions:

Place the eggplant slices on some paper towels and sprinkle with salt. Let the eggplants "sweat out" any bitterness for 20 minutes or so. Pat dry.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Place the eggplant slices on a lightly oiled baking pan, drizzle generously with olive oil. Roast for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, assemble the remaining ingredients on a large serving platter. Begin with the two hummus spreads on opposite sides. Place Tzatziki sauce in the cored bell pepper right at the center of the platter. Assemble the remaining ingredients on the platter to your liking. When the eggplant is roasted to a nice medium-brown, remove it from the oven and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of sumac. Add the roasted eggplant to the platter.

You can cover and refrigerate this mezze party platter; take it out a few minutes before your guests arrive. Enjoy with warm pita and crostini or your choice of crackers!

## Salad & Soup

### Traditional Greek Salad

Simple traditional Greek Salad with ripe tomatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers, onions, olives and creamy feta cheese. Serves 4

#### Ingredients:

- 1 medium red onion
- 4 Medium juicy tomatoes
- 1 English cucumber (hot house cucumber) partially peeled making a striped pattern
- 1 green bell pepper cored
- Greek pitted Kalamata olives a handful to your liking
- kosher salt a pinch
- 4 tablespoon quality extra virgin olive oil I used Greek olive oil
- 1-2 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Blocks of Greek feta cheese do not crumble the feta, leave it in large pieces
- ½ tablespoon dried oregano

#### Instructions:

Cut the red onion in half and thinly slice into half moons. (If you want to take the edge off, place the sliced onions in a solution of iced water and vinegar for a bit before adding to the salad).

Cut the tomatoes into wedges or large chunks (I slice some into rounds and cut the rest in wedges).

Cut the partially peeled cucumber in half lengthwise, then slice into thick halves (at least ½" in thickness)

Thinly slice the bell pepper into rings.

Place everything in a large salad dish. Add a good handful of pitted kalamata olives.

Season very lightly with kosher salt (just a pinch) and a bit of dried oregano.

Pour the olive oil and red wine vinegar all over the salad. Give everything a very gentle toss to mix (do NOT over mix, this salad is not meant to be handled too much).

Now add the feta blocks on top and sprinkle more dried oregano.

Serve with crusty bread.

## Fasolada - Greek Bean Soup

Fasolada is a popular Greek bean soup, occasionally referred to as the national food of the Greeks!

Serves 6

### Ingredients:

- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 dried bay leaf
- 4 ½ cups chicken broth (or vegetable broth)
- 3 15-oz cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ¼ tsp sweet paprika
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley leaves

### Instructions:

In a heavy pot, heat 2 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil over medium-high heat.

Add the chopped onion, salt and pepper. Cook for about 4 minutes over medium-high heat, stirring regularly. Now add the garlic, celery, bay leaf, and oregano. Cook for 5 more minutes, stirring regularly.

Add broth, cannellini beans, cumin, paprika and cayenne pepper. Raise the heat and bring to a rolling boil for 3 minutes or so. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for 10 minutes.

Ladle 2 cups of the soup into the bowl of a small food processor or blender. Blend, then return to the cooking pot. Simmer for another 5 minutes. Remove from heat.

Off heat, stir in about ⅓ cup extra virgin olive oil, the lemon zest, lemon juice and parsley. Transfer to serving bowls and top each bowl with another drizzle of extra virgin olive oil, if desired. Serve with your favorite rustic bread.

## Main Course

### Greek Style Stuffed Peppers

You'll love these stuffed peppers, prepared Greek-style. You can make this with ground meat or with brown or green lentils or mushrooms for a vegetarian option. Serves 6

Ingredients:

- Greek extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, chopped
- ½ lb ground beef or lamb / 1 cup cooked lentils/ mushrooms
- Kosher salt + black pepper
- 1 tsp ground allspice or Baharat spice
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 small bunch fresh parsley, chopped ( about 1 cup packed fresh parsley. Or a mixture of chopped fresh parsley and fresh dill)
- 1 cup white rice, soaked in water for 20 to 30 minutes, then drained
- ¾ tsp hot or sweet paprika
- ¼ cup tomato sauce
- 2 ¼ cup water
- 6 bell peppers, any colors, tops removed and cored
- ¾ cup veggie broth (or water)

Instructions:

In a medium heavy pot, heat 1 tablespoon of extra virgin oil. Saute the chopped onions until golden. Now add the meat/lentils/mushrooms and cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until the meat is deeply browned. Season with salt, pepper, allspice, minced garlic (or garlic powder). Stir in the chickpeas and cook briefly.

To the same pot, now add the parsley, rice (which had been soaked in water and drained), paprika, and tomato sauce. Stir to combine. Add the water and bring to a high simmer until the liquid has reduced by half. Then turn the heat to low, cover and cook for 20 minutes or until the rice is fully cooked and no longer hard nor too chewy. Taste and adjust seasoning to your liking.

Grill the peppers. While the rice is cooking, heat a grill or indoor griddle or skillet over medium-high. Grill the bell peppers for 10-15 minutes, covered, and turning over as needed so that the peppers will soften and gain some color. Remove from heat and set aside to cool briefly.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Assemble stuffed peppers. Assemble the bell peppers open-side up in a baking dish filled with  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup broth or water. Fill each of the bell peppers with the cooked stuffing mixture of meat, rice and chickpeas.

Cover and bake. Cover the baking dish with foil (making sure the foil does not touch the stuffed peppers) and place the dish on the middle rack of your heated oven. Bake for 20-30 minutes.

Remove from the oven and garnish with parsley, if you like, and serve.

To serve stuffed peppers as a main dish Greek-style, add Tzatziki sauce.

## Tzatziki Sauce

Ingredients:

- $\frac{3}{4}$  English cucumber, partially peeled (striped) and sliced
- 1 tsp kosher salt, divided
- 4 to 5 garlic cloves, peeled, finely grated or minced (you can use less if you prefer)
- 1 tsp white vinegar
- 1 tbsp Greek Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 2 cups Greek yogurt (I used organic fat free Greek yogurt, but you can use 2% or whole milk Greek yogurt, if you like)
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ground white pepper
- Warm pita bread for serving Sliced vegetables for serving

Instructions:

In a food processor, grate the cucumbers. Toss with  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon kosher salt. Transfer to a fine mesh strainer over a deep bowl to drain. Spoon the grated cucumber into a cheesecloth or a double thickness napkin and squeeze dry. Set aside briefly.

In one large mixing bowl, place the garlic with remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, white vinegar, and extra virgin olive oil. Mix to combine.

Add the grated cucumber to the large bowl with the garlic mixture. Stir in the yogurt and white pepper. Combine thoroughly. Cover tightly and refrigerate for a couple of hours.

When ready to serve, stir the tzatziki sauce to refresh and transfer to a serving bowl, drizzle with more extra virgin olive oil, if you like. Add a side of warm pita bread and your favorite vegetables. Enjoy!

## Mediterranean Style Toasted Orzo with Parmesan and Sundried Tomatoes

This nutty Toasted Orzo Pasta Recipe with Garlic, Parmesan and Sundried Tomatoes will steal the show next to your favorite protein. You can even serve it as a quick and easy vegetarian meal on its own! This recipe will feed 4 people as a vegetarian main and about 6 or so as a side.

### Ingredients:

- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 ½ cups orzo pasta
- Kosher salt
- 5 cloves garlic (minced)
- red pepper flakes (optional)
- ½ lemon (juice of)
- 1 cup parsley (chopped, packed)
- ½ cup dill (chopped)
- ⅓ cup sundried tomatoes in olive oil (chopped)
- black pepper
- ½ to ¾ cup grated parmesan (more to your liking)

### Instructions:

In a large saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil over medium-high. Add the orzo and cook, tossing around, until toasted to a beautiful golden brown.

Add at least 7 cups of boiling water to the saucepan and season well with kosher salt. Cook the pasta in boiling water to al dente according to the package instructions (about 7 to 8 minutes).

Just before the pasta is fully cooked (about 5 minutes), take a cup of the starchy pasta water and save it aside for now.

In a large pan, warm ½ cup extra virgin olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and season with a pinch of kosher salt and red pepper flakes, if using. Cook, tossing regularly, until just fragrant. Add the lemon juice and ½ cup of the pasta cooking water. Raise the heat if needed to bring to a boil. Add the parsley and dill.

When the pasta is ready, drain and add it to the pan and toss to combine. Season with kosher salt and black pepper. Add the sundried tomatoes and a bit of the grated parmesan. Toss to combine. If needed, add a little more of the pasta cooking water. Finish with more Parmesan and red pepper flakes.

## Desserts

### Greek Orange Honey Cake with Pistachios

This light, flavor-packed honey cake skips all the fuss. And it's the simple cake that will feed a crowd. Yields up to 15 pieces.

For the Cake:

- 5 large eggs
- 1 cup low-fat Greek yogurt (I used fat-free plain Greek yogurt)
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 5 tbsp ground almonds (do this in a small food processor)
- zest of 1 Meyer lemon
- zest of 1 orange
- 1 ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup coarse semolina (Cream of Wheat, or this Creamy Wheat Cereal)
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon Greek extra virgin olive oil
- Handful shaved almonds for topping, optional
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For the Honey Pistachio Syrup

- 1 1/4 cup shelled salted pistachios
- 1 ¼ cup quality runny honey
- juice of 2 oranges
- juice of 1 lemon

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Grease a 9 x 13 baking pan with butter and dust with flour (shake the pan a little to get an even coating of flour).

Make the cake batter:- Place all the cake ingredients (except the shaved almonds) in a large mixing bowl. Mix with a wooden spoon or a whisk to combine.

Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan and spread evenly with a spatula.

Bake in a heated oven for 25 to 30 minutes, until golden and well cooked through. Insert a wooden skewer into the center of the cake, it should come out clean if the cake is done.

Remove from the oven and let the cake completely cool in the pan.

Once the cake has cooled, prepare the honey syrup. Toast the pistachio in a dry non-stick pan over low to medium heat (pan needs to be large enough for the remaining syrup ingredients). Once they start to brown, stir in the honey. Add the orange juice and



lemon juice. Bring to a boil for 1 to 2 minutes, or until nice and syrupy. (Do NOT taste the hot syrup, it will burn your mouth)

Stab the cake all over with a small knife or a skewer to create holes. Pour the honey pistachio syrup all over the cake as evenly as possible. If you need to, use a spoon to distribute the pistachios across the top of the cake. Sprinkle shaved almonds, if using. You can cut the cake into 12 to 15 squares and serve at this point.

Note: The syrup needs to be hot when you pour it on the cooled cake; the cake will better absorb it. Also, for best results, allow the cake to sit for a few hours before cutting and serving. It is even better the next day when the flavors and the moisture have settled in.

## Melomakarona Cookies

Melomakarona are soft, oval-shaped Greek cookies scented with orange and cinnamon, drenched in honey syrup and covered with crushed walnuts. Yes, they are irresistible! This recipe makes 60 cookies; they keep well so that you can enjoy them for a while or gift them to family and friends.

### Ingredients:

#### For the syrup:

- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 orange, zested and cut in half
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 cup honey

#### For the cookies:

- 2 cups extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup brandy
- ½ cup orange juice
- Zest of 1 orange
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 7 ½ cups all purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ cup to 1 cup walnut halves, finely chopped (chop the walnuts after measuring)

### Instructions:

Make the syrup. In a medium saucepan, combine the water, sugar, orange, and cinnamon stick. Bring to a boil over medium-high for 5 minutes or until the sugar dissolves completely. Remove from heat and stir in the honey. Set the syrup aside to cool completely (do not remove the cinnamon or orange until you are ready to use the syrup).

Heat the oven to 350 degrees F.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the EVOO, brandy, orange juice, orange zest, 1 cup sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Mix.

In another bowl, sift the flour, baking powder and baking soda.

Slowly, add the dry flour mixture to the wet olive oil mixture (I added ⅓ of the flour at a time), while mixing with a wooden spoon. Once all the flour has been added, use your hands to knead the dough until smooth (do not overwork the dough).

Prepare a large sheet pan (or two) and line with parchment paper.

Take about 1 ½ tablespoons of the cookie dough and shape it between your palms into an oval shape (like a small egg). Lightly flatten (do not flatten too much) and set on the prepared sheet pan. Repeat, forming the cookies until you have used up all the dough. Line the cookies in the sheet pan, making sure to leave about ½ inch between them.

In the center of each cookie, lightly press the tines of a fork in a crosshatch pattern. The cookies should flatten a tiny bit in the center (but you should not push so hard the cookies become too flat).

Bake on the center rack of your heated oven for 20 to 25 minutes; the cookies should be golden in color but they should not brown too much.

Remove the orange and cinnamon stick from the syrup.

As soon as you take the cookies out of the oven, put them in the cold syrup, flipping them around for about 20 to 30 seconds or so (you will need to do this in batches, making sure that all the cookies are able to absorb enough syrup).

With a slotted spoon, remove the cookies from the syrup and arrange them on a tray or directly on your serving dish. Sprinkle each cookie with a generous pinch of the chopped walnuts (pat the walnuts lightly so they will stick to the cookies).

Note:

Storage: Store melomakarona in an air-tight container at room temperature. And to prevent the layers of cookies from sticking together, it helps to place sheets of wax paper in between the cookies.

Recipes inspired by Suzy Karadesh.

Καλή όρεξη!

Kalí óreksi!