



Greek Food

The Greek diet was very healthy. Food in Ancient Greece consisted of grains, wheat, barley, fruit, vegetables, breads, and cakes. Most Greeks were farmers and they ate the food that they grew. They also kept goats, for milk and cheese.



Vegetables were a huge part of the Greek diet. Most Greeks ate a diet that was almost vegetarian. Among the most common vegetables and plants eaten by Greeks were asparagus, fennel, cucumbers, and celery. Other often consumed vegetables were cabbage, broad bean, onion, garlic, leeks, chickpeas. Fruits and nuts were also a large part of the Greek diet. Apples, pears, cherries grew wild. The fruits were eaten both fresh and dried. Most popular were figs, raisins, apples, pears, pomegranates, grapes, and dates. Nuts such as hazelnuts, walnuts and chestnuts were a common part of the menu.



As most of the Greeks lived very near the sea, they also ate a lot of fish, squid and shellfish. Fish was the main source of protein in the Greek diet. Beef was very expensive, so it was rarely eaten. Beef and pork were only available to poor people during religious festivals. It was during the festivals that cows or pigs were sacrificed to the gods, and the meat was cooked and handed out to the public. Greeks most frequently ate hens eggs. Eggs were usually consumed soft or hard-boiled for lunch or as starters at dinner.

In the summer months there were plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables to eat and in the winter they ate dried fruit and food they had stored like apples and lentils.



Perhaps the most important food to the ancient Greeks was the olive. It was not simply a food. It was also a big part of Greek history. Olives were also crushed and their oil was used for lamps. Olive oil could also be used as a beauty product. Women rubbed into their skin to make it soft and shiny.



Breakfast was eaten just after sunrise and consisted of bread dipped in wine. Bread was mainly made of barley and it was hard to eat so wine made it softer. They also ate something called a *teganites* (τηγανίτης), which would have resembled a pancake. These



were made with wheat flour, olive oil, honey and curdled milk and were usually topped with honey or cheese. Honey was used much like we use sugar, as a sweetener in many different foods.

Lunch was again bread dipped in wine along with some olives, figs, cheese or dried fish. Supper was the main meal of each day. It was eaten near sunset. It consisted of vegetables, fruit, fish, and possibly honey cakes.

Dinner was the most important meal and most of the foods were consumed then. At dinner, the Ancient Greeks would eat: eggs (from quail and hens), fish, legumes, olives, cheeses, breads, figs, and any vegetables they could grow and were in season. Such as: asparagus, cabbage, carrots, and cucumbers. Red meat was reserved for the wealthy since it was harder to get than the fish from the sea. Dessert was not a daily thing in Ancient Greece. It was only consumed on occasion. As for sweets, sugar wasn't known to the Ancient Greeks, honey was the main sweetener. Thus, things like cheese drizzled with honey, or figs and olives with honey, was the most common type of dessert.

The way that Greeks ate was also important. Having a meal was not only about eating food. It was also a chance to talk and enjoy the company of family and friends. A Greek meal was an event! This is still the case in modern-day Greece, where dinner with friends and family may last for hours!