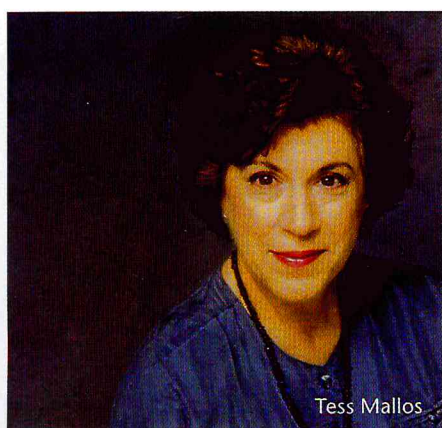


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# Greek

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WHILE AUSTRALIA'S GREEK IMMIGRANT POPULATION IS SUBSTANTIAL, IT TOOK ONE WOMAN FROM CASINO TO INTRODUCE US TO THE WONDERFUL POTENTIAL IN THE KITCHEN.



**T**ess Mallos was credited with introducing Australians to the joys of Greek cooking. When she passed away in 2012, her obituary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* read, "As the offspring of Greek immigrants, teaching many Australians how to cook 'foreign' food, she could have held herself up as the poster child of immigration."

Tess' first cookbook, *The Greek Cookbook*, published in 1976, reached 13 editions, the most recent in 2012.

In the introduction to that edition, Tess praises the health benefits of Greek food. "The Greeks are the largest consumers of olive oil and vegetables in the Mediterranean, eat lots of bread, seafood, pulses and fresh fruit, and drink wine in moderation; such food habits have been identified as being beneficial to good health, as a preventative not only against heart disease, but also against certain cancers, adult-onset diabetes and strokes."

Author, health coach, teacher and chef Maria Benardis, is also the founder of Greek cooking classes, Greekalicious. Her reason for starting classes reflects

Tess Mallos' reverence for the health merits of Greek food. "I wanted people to better connect to Greece and its dishes by awakening them to the stories, healing wisdoms and longevity philosophies attached to each dish and ingredient."

Maria's family came to Australia following WWII, a time, she says, when "(her family's) Greek food was looked at strangely." To them, the Australian food scene was "bland and non-colourful", she explains. "They wanted to add colour and taste by introducing and sharing with others new Greek dishes."

Thanks to educators like Tess and Maria, Australians have come to love Greek food. In Maria's opinion, "Greek dishes are viewed as a way to get the family together around the dinner table to share one's stories and love. Greek food is all about lots of small dishes to be shared and to get the love and conversation going."

However, Maria adds, "We still have a long way to go. There are many dishes still not being cooked at restaurants that I enjoy in Greece."

## KEY INGREDIENTS

Maria says that key Greek ingredients are, "extra virgin olive oil, filo pastry, masticha (mastic resin from Chios), Greek saffron from Kozani, Greek cheeses such as feta, lemons and herbs such as oregano."

## RECIPES

"When ancient Greeks sacrificed animals to the Gods the ritual was done with a sword," Maria explains. "The sacrificial meat would then be placed on the sword for the ceremony and the meat offered for consumption from the sword after it had been cooked. The word souvlaki has originated from this ancient ritual. The Greek word for skewer is 'souvla', and this also means sword. When you consume a souvlaki it means to 'eat a little sword'". "Skordalia is an ancient Greek dish that most regions of Greece have individualised by changing or adding ingredients", Maria says. "Some regions substitute the bread for potatoes, butter beans, or peas, broad beans and other types of beans. Other parts also add grated Greek cheeses such as grated kefalotiri, feta or graviera".





## + Wine

### + Figs stuffed with feta and thyme wrapped in bastourma

The delicate balance between the flesh of the fig, the creamy nature of the feta and the salty aftertaste of the bastourma is what makes this Greek favourite shine bright. When it comes to wine, it has to be white, light and fresh so as complement, not dominate and wash away any flavour components. Try Semillon, Verdelho or Sauv Blanc from a cool climate.





## + Wine

+ Seafood souvlaki with lemon and walnut and pomegranate skordalia  
The beauty in this dish, like most Greek dishes, lies in its simplicity and harmony of the separate elements. You have the light char of the fish flesh enhanced by the dried oregano working with the sweet, crunchy lift of the skordalia. When it comes to wine, you want a light drop with fresh, but not sweet, fruit flavours and acidity. Again, young Semillon will work nicely, but a fresh, dry Rosé like the one recommended in this section will shine.



Seafood souvlaki with lemon and walnut and pomegranate skordalia

Makes 8 skewers (serves 4)

Prep and cook time 20 minutes (plus up to two hours marinating)

700g thick swordfish steaks, or other thick, firm fish like ling, skin removed

2 tsp rigani or dried oregano

½ tsp dried mint

2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Lemon cheeks to serve

Walnut and pomegranate skordalia

⅓ loaf strong white bread, crust removed

2 cloves garlic

1 tsp pomegranate molasses

80ml extra virgin olive oil

⅓ cup walnut pieces, roughly chopped and toasted until fragrant

1. To make skordalia, soak bread briefly in cold water and squeeze well to remove moisture. Drop garlic into food processor and when chopped, add bread and pomegranate molasses. Slowly drizzle in olive oil and ⅓ cup water until mixture is smooth and has a texture similar to white sauce. If too thick, add more water, one teaspoon at a time. Pour mixture into serving dish, fold through most of the walnuts and season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle over remaining walnuts.
2. Cut fish into bite-sized (approx 3cm) squares and toss with salt, pepper, rigani, mint and olive oil, then marinade for up to 2 hours. Thread onto short skewers.
3. Pre-heat grill, barbecue or a cast iron griddle pan. Cook fish (use baking paper or silicone if desired) for 6 minutes, turning until cooked on all sides.
4. Squeeze over lemon juice and serve with skordalia as a dipping sauce.

Figs stuffed with feta and thyme wrapped in bastourma

Makes 12

Prep and cook time 10 minutes

6 figs, halved

100g feta cheese, crumbled

6 sprigs thyme, leaves removed

6 slices bastourma or bresaola (or substitute with prosciutto)

Olive oil, for brushing

Ground black pepper, for serving

1. Lay the figs on the bench, cut side up. Top each fig with crumbled feta and a sprinkle of thyme leaves.
2. Cut each slice of bastourma in half lengthwise. Wrap a piece of bastourma securely around each half stuffed fig.
3. Pre-heat the grill or a cast iron griddle pan over medium heat. Brush the wrapped figs with olive oil and cook, turning frequently, until the bastourma is crisp (you can also oven bake). Serve immediately, sprinkled with ground black pepper.

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