

# What Would Hippocrates Eat?

Ancient Greek wisdom for a healthier, happier life

MARIA BENARDIS

The ancient Greek father of medicine, Hippocrates, penned that “all diseases begin in the gut,” and that for true healing and optimum health, we need to exercise, “let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food,” and understand that the “natural forces within us are the true healers of disease.”

The word “diet” comes from the ancient Greek “*diaita*,” which means “the way of life.” In ancient Greece, a diet was about good health, which required the nurturing of the mind, body, and soul. One component of that was food. The ancient Greeks also noted the link between the gut and emotional health.

Below is some ancient Greek wisdom for taking care of your gut and boosting the immune system for overall good health.

## Eat Wholesome, High Vibrational Energy Food

The ancient Greek Hippocratic way of healing was “wisdom healing,” using food and other methods to nourish the mind, body, and soul. It is important to eat an abundance of food that is good for our gut health and our immune system, and to keep to a minimum or avoid all foods that are not.

Cook and eat ingredients and foods with high vibrational energy, meaning ones that are nutrient-rich. These include fresh, certified organic fruit, vegetables, and herbs; herbal teas; spices; spring water; nuts and seeds; healthy oils such as olive oil, coconut oil, and avocado oil; legumes and whole grains; and natural sweeteners such as honey and maple syrup.

Eat raw, dehydrated, or lightly steamed foods whenever possible, and incorporate fermented foods into your diet. Hippocrates believed that most diseases began in the gut, and called fermented foods “probiotic,” meaning “for life” in Greek. In ancient times, doctors prescribed sour milk, yogurt, apple cider vinegar, and pickles for digestion. The ancient Greeks also used sauerkraut to treat and prevent intestinal infections.

**Eating and cooking will always be considered a form of therapy in Greek culture. They are not tasks or chores that need to be done, but moments in time to heal, to be still, and to reflect.**

Keep to a minimum or avoid low-vibrational energy foods and ingredients. These include genetically modified food; food that has been treated with chemicals and pesticides; white rice and flours; sugars and artificial sweeteners (unhealthy bacteria thrives on sugar); sodas; alcohol; meat; fish and poultry; processed, packaged, canned, and fast foods; unhealthy oils such as canola, soybean, and cottonseed oils; margarine and lard; frozen foods; pasteurized cow's milk; yogurt and cheese; and cooked foods that are deep-fried and microwaved. If you eat meat, make sure it is organic, or at the very least grass-fed and grass-finished.

## Eat a Rainbow of Seasonal Food

“Everything in its time and mackerel in August.” – Greek proverb

Eat fruits and vegetables that are in season for optimum nutrition. Eat a variety of colors—color heals.

Orange and yellow foods help reduce age-related macular degeneration and lower cholesterol. Examples include yellow peppers, oranges, carrots, and lemons.

Red foods, including strawberries, tomatoes, red grapes, and raspberries, help lower blood pressure, improve heart function, and support joints.

Green foods, such as green herbs and leafy vegetables, help detoxify the body and aid digestion.

Blue and purple foods, like blueberries, purple grapes, and pomegranates, help boost the immune system and reduce inflammation.

White foods, including garlic, bananas, white onions, and mushrooms, help boost the immune system and balance hormones.



The ancient Greeks, including Hippocrates, knew that food was medicine.



Agape, or unconditional love, is the most important ingredient in the kitchen.



Eat a rainbow of seasonal, nutrient-rich produce.

## Listen to Your Inner Voice

“Know thyself.” –Oracle of Delphi

You know your body better than anyone else, so it is important to meditate, be still, and listen to what is required for healing. Ask yourself what you would like to eat and cook.

Before I make most of my eating decisions, I pause for a brief meditation and pray to center myself and to receive centered decisions. When you know yourself and trust yourself, you gain your own voice and guidance as to what foods are right for you and your body for good health.

## Cook With Love

“Love is the cause of unity of all things.” –Aristotle

The ancient Greeks believed that food and our energy (a Greek word, “*energeia*”) when cooking influences the balance of the humors and our overall well-being.

We do not eat merely to top up the fuel tanks in our bodies for our physical well-being; we eat to improve our spiritual well-being and to nourish

the soul.

When cooking, it is important to be consciously aware of our energy before we go into the kitchen. Emissions of energy that is not harmonious and joyous can lead to imbalances in our emotional, physical, and spiritual selves. It is therefore vital to take care when cooking so that we share agape (unconditional love) energy.

This is the most important ingredient to bring into your kitchen and when cooking. If the energy that you give off is agape and joyful, then your dish will work out to be healing and harmonious. Our energy is taken on by the ingredients, forming a part of the recipe and the dish.

## Adopt Healthy and Happy Thoughts

“Day by day, what you choose, what you think, and what you do is who you become.” –Heraclitus

Those who approached the Oracle at Delphi were encouraged to have “good thoughts.” An excess of unhappy thoughts can cause an imbalance in the body and lead to many illnesses. Inner balance and agape cannot coexist with worry, stress, anger, frustration, fear, anxiety, and competitiveness. Substitute fear with faith.

**“Everything in its time and mackerel in August.”**

Greek proverb

To assist with emotional and physical health, the ancient Greeks incorporated many therapies, including meditation, prayer, music, light chakra, massage, and sun. Aristotle knew the power of music could heal the sick, and many doctors in ancient Greece used vibration to aid in digestion, treat mental disturbance, and induce sleep. Aristotle, in his famous book “*De Anima*,” wrote that flute music could arouse strong emotions and purify the soul.

**We do not eat merely to top up the fuel tanks in our bodies for our physical wellbeing; we eat to improve our spiritual wellbeing and to nourish the soul.**

## Eat With Peace and Calm

“A crust eaten in peace is better than a banquet partaken in anxiety.” –Aesop

Another important eating practice for good gut health and immunity is to eat with peace, calm, and joy. It is important to not rush meal times. In Greece, people leave their work for lunch to go home and enjoy the meal with their families and friends. When we rush our eating time, it interrupts the harmony, the flow of energy, and the time needed to

enjoy a meal that in the end will nourish and heal our body and soul.

To ensure a long, healthy life, we all need to eat mindfully and consciously, so we become aware of what food we eat and how it affects us.

Eating and cooking will always be considered a form of therapy in Greek culture. They are not tasks or chores that need to be done, but moments in time to heal, to be still, and to reflect. I remember many years ago when I was meeting up with a friend in Greece for coffee, on the phone, she told me that we were not having coffee but engaging in a coffee therapy session. A level of spirituality and awareness is always attached to the activity.

Maria Benardis is a Gourmand Award-winning author, chef, motivational speaker, intuitive health and wellness coach, and founder of Greekalicious. Parts of this article have been excerpted from the books “*My Greek Family Table*” and the ebook “*Cooking & Eating Wisdom for Better Health*” by Maria Benardis.



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## RECIPE

### KALE AND QUINOA DOLMADES WITH YOGURT DIPPING SAUCE

**Serves:** 10 large dolmades

This dish is my modern twist on the quintessential Greek dish, dolmades. Instead of vine leaves, I have used another ancient Greek ingredient: kale.

The ancient Greeks loved to stuff items of food, and one of their favorites was to mash foods into a paste and wrap it in leaves or breads. I believe that kale was one of these ingredients.

I have also used quinoa instead of rice or bulgur, as is the tradition. You could use cooked brown rice or barley instead of quinoa.

## INGREDIENTS:

### For dolmades mixture:

- 1/2 cup uncooked quinoa
- 10 large curly Kale leaves, stems removed and washed well
- 1/4 cup spring onions (scallions), finely chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh zucchini, grated
- 1/2 cup carrot, grated
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sunflower seeds
- Sea salt and cracked pepper, to taste

### For the dressing:

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

### For the yogurt dipping sauce:

- 1 cup Greek-style yogurt
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- 1 clove of garlic, minced

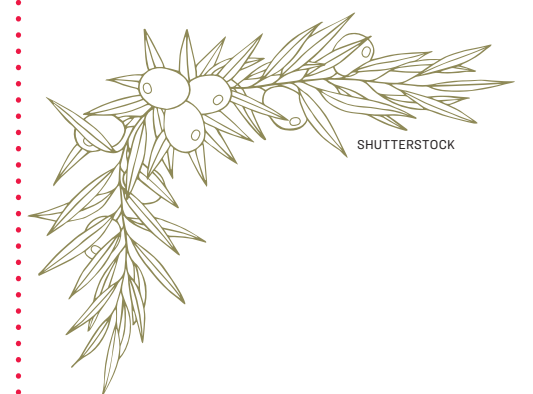
Cook the quinoa according to the packet instructions. Set aside and let it cool down. Transfer to a bowl. Place the kale leaves in a steamer and steam them for 5 minutes until they soften. Transfer them to a plate and allow them to cool down to room temperature. Add the remaining ingredients for the dolmades mixture to the quinoa and mix well.

Place all the ingredients for the dressing in a small bowl and whisk. Add the dressing to the quinoa mixture and mix well.

Lay each kale leaf on a flat surface and spoon a generous amount of the mixture on the end where the stem begins. Fold the sides of the leaf over the filling. Then roll the leaf all the way up, starting at the stem end, to form a neat parcel. When you have finished making all the dolmades, arrange them on a serving platter.

Place all the ingredients for the yogurt dipping sauce in a bowl and mix well. Place the dipping sauce on the side of the platter and serve.

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