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GREEKALICIOUS - more



As I'd planned, on a recent Saturday morning I attended one of Maria's classes. What an experience!

About a dozen of us eager students almost fill the small hall in a back street of Paddington. In front of us, a table displays various Greek specialties, and Maria herself, in her navy Greekalicious apron, and jaunty cap ('my father was a fisherman in Greece,' she explains), is there too, ready to take us on a journey to the land she knows and loves so much. Tantalisingly the scent of some dishes already prepared escape from the kitchen behind her.

For no particular reason (that I'm admitting anyway) I have booked in with a friend for the Aphrodisiac food session. Maria loses no time in explaining how appropriate this is for Greek cookery (think honey, figs, asparagus, seafood.... Oh, and of course Aphrodite).

The dishes - which become our meal later, served at a long table already set at the back of the room - include baked asparagus, scattered with fetta, prawns wrapped in shredded kataifa pastry and fried in mastic-infused oil for a subtle flavour, filo-wrapped seafood, and a magnificent leafy, herby salad scattered with pomegranate seeds.

It is all so healthy, as Maria tells us she attempts wherever possible to source organic wholesome produce. It shows too. Everything smells so good, looks so luscious.

Maria passes around the more unusual ingredients. Mastic, for instance, is a gum that drips pearl-like from a tree in only one certain location. She travels annually to Greece and returns with her suitcases laden with this as well as wild herbs she has dried herself on the roof of a relative's house and other goodies that are only found in Greece. Australian Quarantine officers must recognise her by now - 'I declare everything,' she assure us - and no doubt make memos to themselves to attend one of her classes too.



When we are drooling in anticipation as the morning draws close to ending, there is one last treat: baked fresh figs with honey yoghurt, prepared for dessert.

Understandably, our group is more than ready to be seated for lunch, despite tasting the prawns as an appetiser during the demonstration. Bottles of Greek rosé appear

to complement our meal and we are served from heaping platters.

If we were outside shaded from the Greek sun under a fig tree we couldn't be happier.