

# The greece culture essay sample



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Greek food can seem very overwhelming at first glance. With all the history behind the great nation of Greece and the culture that has developed behind it. Greek cooking offers an incredibly rich and diverse array of foods and beverages that are the culmination of literally thousands of years of living, cooking, and eating. While each Greek meal is fresh and inviting, it is also a trip back through Greece's history. Because Greek food has had such a long living history, it has made its way all around the world and educated people on not just what they are eating, but also how they are eating it. In American culture, we have taken time away from enjoying food and eating around the table, which is due to the lack of time or schedule, but in a Greek way of eating they encourage only eating with company and conversing. Eating for the Greek is not to live, but in more ways the Greek live to eat.

The Greek diet is the excellent example of traditional Mediterranean eating; it is made by kinds of colorful and tasteful foods which are high in nutrients and low in animal fats. Wheat has been consumed in Greece for quite some time and it is the main part of Greek Cuisine. Wheat is the ingredient for making various sorts of breads like pita bread and crusty whole grain peasant bread. Bulgur that is made from cracked whole wheat is consumed with hearty stews or soups and salads. Pasta introduced to the Greeks by the Italians is a well-liked wheat-based food. Rice is another significant grain-food in the Greek diet; it is made with stews or wrapped in grape leaves to make dolmades.

Similar to wheat, olives have been cultivated in Greece for thousands of years. The golden green oil which is pulled out from the first cold pressing of olives is called extra virgin olive oil and it is mainly used in many traditional

Greek dishes. Crusty bread which is consumed with a little extra virgin olive oil is a common accompaniment to food. Besides that, olives are also eaten whole. The regular eaten type is the plump kalamata olive that is added to stews and salads.

As we know, Greece is mainly surrounded by sea, so they eat fish and shellfish usually. The prevalent types of fish and shellfish include tuna, mullet, bass, halibut, swordfish, anchovies, sardines, shrimp, octopus, squid and mussels. This fish and seafood is eaten in different ways: grilled and seasoned with garlic and lemon juice, baked with yogurt and herbs; cooked in rich tomato sauce, added to soups; or served cold as a side dish. Chicken and game birds such as quail and Guinea fowl are enjoyed regularly.

The warm climate of Greece makes it a good place for growing vegetables and fruits. The colorful and flavorful vegetables form an important part of Greek cuisine. These include tomatoes, garlic, onions, spinach, artichokes, fennel, lettuce, cabbage, horta (wild greens), zucchini, eggplant and peppers. Fruits are consumed either fresh or kept by drying. Popular ones include apricots, grapes, dates, cherries, apples, pears, plums and figs. Different kinds of herbs and seasonings are used to flavor food including flat-leaf parsley, dill, oregano, cilantro, mint, ground pepper, sea salt and cinnamon. What is more, lemon juice and lemon rind are used to season food and in dressings.

Legumes such as chickpeas, lima beans, split peas and lentils are commonly used in Greek cooking. They are eaten either whole in stews, bakes, pilafs, soups and salads, or pureed and used as a dip or spread such as hummus.

Many varieties of nuts are used in cooking or consumed as snacks such as pine nuts, almonds, walnuts and pistachios.

Food is a big part of the Greek culture and some may wonder how the food is normally prepared. Greek food is prepared in a way that most Americans may not be familiar with. In regards to cooking the common cooking methods may involve boiling, simmering, frying and stewing. Some of these methods can even involve wood burning fires. Two more common methods are grilling and baking which we seem to be more familiar with. In the Ancient Greek culture they started using clay, glazed and fire pots. Some of these pots are still present in cooking today. It is common in the Greek culture to preserve foods by salting, smoking, drying and preserving in fat and syrup. Food can also be stored with oil on top to keep the air out. These methods are very interesting because they differ a lot from the American culture. Greeks cook in a very slow manner and don't rush anything. It seems as if the slower they cook the better they believe the food turns out.

The Greek culture has a different way of consuming food. In Ancient Greek culture it was common to eat outside in a courtyard near a home. They were able to eat outside because the cooking equipment was generally light and could be set up outside. On sunny days the Greek women would sit under a covered area because pale skin was seen as a sign of beauty. The women tried to stay out of the sun whenever possible. This tradition of eating outside started in the Ancient Greek culture but is still practiced today. In the present Greek culture meals are seen as very fun. It is normal to have a lot of noise and the meal may be similar to a social gathering. It may be very noisy but overall it is just a happy social gathering for many people. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-greece-culture-essay-sample/>

noise level may go up a lot but it is very common for it to rise to a high level while eating.

There can be all sorts of people present at the large meals. There may be a lot of people including friends and family. It is said to be a very due to all of the conversations going on. Those eating will reach across the table and constantly grab things to put on their plate. The Greek way of eating may be a little different but it seems like fun but a very busy meal. What an American may see as impolite may be normal to someone from Greece. They tend to be sitting down and lean in and put their fork directly in a dish and eat right off of it. Throughout a meal one may be constantly leaning in and reaching over others trying to get food. Greek meals seem like a fun social gathering for large numbers of people. So if you're looking for a way to encourage conversation and camaraderie at mealtime, go Greek! It's hard to be silent when everyone at the table is headed for that last olive (about.com)."

After studying the Greek culture I have found some similarities to my own culture which is Italian. Before researching Greece I thought my culture would have no similarities at all but I was wrong. The way we eat in my home is similar to the way the Greeks eat in theirs. We normally eat inside and will have food set up on the table. Most people will sit down and reach everywhere and even over people if necessary. This may be seen as rude to some but that is just how our family eats. There will be food set up everywhere and it is okay to stick your fork in a dish to have some.

My mom and Grandma are the ones that do a lot of cooking in our family dinners. The similarity I see with the Greek culture is the fact that time is not an issue for them. They don't care how long it takes to cook a meal because they are only worried about how long it will take. It is not uncommon for them to spend an entire day in the kitchen just to cook all the dishes that they want. My grandma will let something simmer all day at a very low level instead of cooking it real fast. She is so worried about the taste and the way it turns out and that relates a lot to the Greek culture.

Another similarity I have noticed is the presence of wine in all of the meals. My family doesn't see wine as an alcoholic drink only for special occasions. My family will relax and have a glass of wine with almost every meal. They don't drink to "get drunk" by any means it is just part of our culture. Some of my family drinks red wine because they believe it is better for their health. They drink wine for therapeutic reasons rather than social needs.

I see one major differentiation in the cultures in regards to the ingredients being used. My family used olive oil a lot but does not use most of the other Greek ingredients. The Greek culture involves a lot of olive oil, honey, yoghurt, fresh fruits and vegetables, fish and lamb. The Italians seems to involve more carbohydrates in their meals especially bread. I don't see honey, yoghurt or fish present in many of the meals my family consumes. A lot of the ingredients and food seem to be different in the Greek culture.

I believe that Italians may prepare and consume food in a similar way to the Greeks but they don't necessarily eat the same things. My family tends to prepare food in the same way as the Greek culture but we don't commonly

eat the same dishes. I think my culture has a lot of things in common but we also have a lot of things that are different.

In researching Greece and its food and culture, I came to discover the many do's and don'ts when visiting a Greek home. Greek etiquette ranges from gift giving to dining table manners. At a Greek home, table manners are continental. The fork is held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating. Greeks have dinner family style. Therefore, during dinner, the eldest at the table is served first. When Greeks invite guests to the house for dinner, the guest themselves also have a set of standards to follow by.

Etiquette in Greece is very important. When invited to a Greek home, guest should follow a series of good etiquette to show appreciation towards the host family. If invited, being punctual is arriving 30 minutes late. Punctuality is not particularly important in Greece. Make sure you dress well as it demonstrates a sign of respect for your host. In Greece, dress code is more formal than in most European countries. Women are mainly seen wearing dresses. Gifts are appreciated when invited to a Greek home. Gifts should be small and wrapped nicely. In Greek culture, the receiver of the gift immediately opens it. Gifts such as wine, brandy, pastries, whiskey, and flowers are more appropriate when visiting a Greek home. Knives and sharp objects are inappropriate gifts. Greek guest should always offer to help prepare dinner or clean up after. Although the host will refuse, it will be appreciated. Guests are also expected to compliment the house when they enter.

During dinner, guests should always remain standing until invited by the host to sit down because the host may have a seat assigned to the guests. Guests also should not start eating until the host starts. Elbows should never be on the table when eating. At the dinner table, Greeks like to talk as it is their time to socialize. Guests are also expected to finish everything on their plate. If the guest does not finish their serving, it is a sign dislike for the food. Therefore, accepting a second portion compliments to cook. It is also impolite to refuse food from the host as that also says the meal was not good. When giving a toast at a Greek dinner, the most common is “stinygiasou”, which means to your health. Honored guest should also return the toast later in the meal. When finish eating, napkins are to be placed next to the plate, forks and knives should be placed parallel on the plate with the handles facing the right.

Greeks are warm hospitable people. When meeting someone for the first time, you are to shake their hands firmly, smile and maintain direct eye contact with the other person. This goes for children too. If you are good friends, embraces and kisses on the cheek are more common. For male friend, slapping each other’s arm is more common. Body language is also very important in Greek culture. Nodding your head is considered impolite in Greek culture. Therefore, a verbal “ yes” is the appropriate thing to do. It is also impolite to make the “ O. K.” sign with your hand as it is a vulgar gesture in Greece. Instead of the “ O. K.” sign, “ thumbs up” is the sign which means ok.

Although punctuality is not important to Greeks, during a business meeting, foreigners are expected to show up on time even though their Greek



counterpart may be late. In Greek business etiquette, Greek's want to know the other person before wanting to do business with them. Business meetings with a Greeks tend to be general conversations. Greeks find trust to be more important than qualification. Greeks dislike written communication like memos and signing documents. Greeks favor face to face meeting and avoid telephone conversations unless necessary.

As a Chinese American, I have mainly adopted both the Chinese culture when it comes to dining etiquette. As a Chinese, it is typical to eat at a round table as it allows everyone to see each other's faces. Guest of honor is always seated to the right of the host; the next in line will sit on his left. Guests should be seated after the host's invitation, and it guests should never be seat at the place where the dishes are served. Similar to Greek culture, dinner starts only when the host starts. On a typical Chinese dining table, there is always a cup, a bowl on a small dish, together with the chopsticks and table spoons. Dishes are always presented in the center of the table so everyone can see the food. Other than soup, all other food is expected to be eaten with chopsticks. But there are certain things that shouldn't be done when using chopsticks. Never stick chopsticks in the center of rice, as this resembles the offering of incense to spirits. Eating should also be paced with everyone else at the table. When eating out, it is sincere to fight to pay the bill. Although the host is expected to pay, offering is very much appreciated.

In Greek culture, you will only find food taboos in their religion. As a Pythagorean, beans are restricted from their daily diet. Some reasons to why beans are not eaten are the connection of beans to Hades. Another reason is <https://assignbuster.com/the-greece-culture-essay-sample/>

that it was believed that souls return through beans to reincarnate. In the Orthodox Church, certain foods are not allowed during Lenten Fasting. Lent Fasting is intended as a spiritual preparation for an experience of communion with God. Some foods restricted during Lent are meat and meat products, dairy, fish, and olive oil. Since this fasting is voluntary, it is not necessarily considered a taboo. Like the Greeks, the Chinese do not have many food taboos. The better known one is eating beef. Some Chinese feel that ox help farmers in the field so they feel that eating beef is eating their helper. Also, similar to the Orthodox Church, the Chinese do not eat meat on the 15th of every lunar month. This is usually done to bless a loved one.

Herbalism is a traditional medicinal or folk medicine practice based on the use of plants and plant extracts. Herbalism is also known as botanical medicine, medical herbalism, herbal medicine, herbology, and phytotherapy. The scope of herbal medicine is sometimes extended to include fungal and bee products, as well as minerals, shells and certain animal parts.

The ancient Greeks made medicinal use of plants. Greek medicinal practices, as preserved in the writings of Hippocrates and – especially – Galen, provided the pattern for later western medicine. Hippocrates advocated the use of a few simple herbal drugs – along with fresh air, rest, and proper diet. Galen, on the other hand, recommended large doses of drug mixtures – including plant, animal, and mineral ingredients. The Greek physician compiled the first European treatise on the properties and uses of medicinal plants, *De Materia Medica*. In the first century AD, Dioscorides wrote a compendium of more than 500 plants that remained an authoritative reference into the 17th century. Similarly important for herbalists and

botanists of later centuries was the Greek book that founded the science of botany, Theophrastus' *Historia Plantarum*, written in the fourth century B. C.

Olive oil has been more than mere food to the peoples of the Mediterranean: it has been medicinal, magical, an endless source of fascination and wonder and the fountain of great wealth and power. The olive tree, symbol of abundance, glory and peace, gave its leafy branches to crown the victorious in friendly games and bloody war, and the oil of its fruit has anointed the noblest of heads throughout history. Olive crowns and olive branches, emblems of benediction and purification, were ritually offered to deities and powerful figures: some were even found in Tutankhamen's tomb. Homer called it "liquid gold." In ancient Greece, athletes ritually rubbed it all over their body. Its mystical glow illuminated history. Drops of it seeped into the bones of dead saints and martyrs through holes in their tombs.

Theologies were the vital element of Greek religion and the Greeks would like to please the Gods so that they can live a life free of hardship and difficulties. The Greeks perform lots of rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and offerings to show that they appreciate the Gods and Oracles. Sacrifices of animals, sheep, cows, goats, pigs and bulls are made to the Gods. Chosen animals for sacrifice are crowned, adorned, purified with water and decorated with barley. Many temples were also built for Greeks to show their respect by offering their sacrifices. The Greeks offered such things as stone freezes, "gold vessels, wheat, wine and honey, milk, water and firstfruits." Prayers and hymns acted with sacrifices, performances, dances and different forms of drama. The Greeks perform music and drama, and offer different

kinds of food and wine to entertain the Gods so that they can have good fortune.

The most popular act of worship in ancient Greece was sacrifices especially for the blood sacrifice of animals. The temples for the Greek religion usually were not for public gathering; many temples were small and that held a cult idol of the deity. Rather, those temples were slaughterhouses; oxen, sheep, horses, swine, dogs, various birds, and almost every kind of beast were presented as sacrificial victims to one deity or another. When we are told in studies of mythology that “ horses are sacred to Poseidon” or roosters to Hermes, it meant that these animals were offered as sacrifices to those gods depending on the custom. The practice was to offer blood, bones, and hide of the sacrificial victims and the rest were enjoyed by the worshippers.

The sacrificial offering should be presented to the god with purification. The chosen animal is supposed to be the most beautiful and healthy animal among the others. Animals are adorned with ribbons and its horns are gilded. Different kinds of animals were offered distinctly according to different divinity. The most common offering was a sheep and the noblest animal would be an ox. Goats and pigs were used very often; the cheapest animal to offer was the piglet. In a procession, the sacrificial participants such as the priests and individuals sent the animal to the altar. During the procession, the animal should follow willingly; reluctant victims are considered a bad sign. In order to show the sacred to the God, a circle which was surrounded by the animals and the participants was made. The sacrificial area became holy after the sacrificial basket and water vessel are made around the table.

If there is one thing everyone looks forward to during the holidays, it would be food. In every culture, there is a special tradition that is synonymous with a certain holiday. Of all holidays celebrated in Greece, some of the most celebrated ones are Easter, Christmas, and New Year's Day (or Saint Basil's Day).

Easter is probably Greece's most celebrated holiday. Holy Thursday is spent coloring eggs and baking sweet bread, called Tsoureki. Traditionally on Good Friday, women are not allowed to light fires or cook. According to Yasou, "The characteristic foods of this important holiday are the Red-Colored Eggs, the Arni sti Souvla (Lamb on the Spit), the Kokoretsi (Lamb Entrails Grilled on the Spit), and the Mayeritsa (Easter Soup). Easter is the feast that, more than any other, makes the migrating Greeks return to their homeland to roast the lamb on the spit and to crack the red Easter eggs with their families." The tradition with the red egg is that the eggs are hit against each family member's forehead. Whoever egg cracks first wins.

During the Christmas season, butter cookies called Kourabiedes are seen everywhere. Traditionally during this holiday stuffed meats, like Turkey or Chicken that is most likely stuffed with ground meat. You may also find Roast Pork or Lamb as part of the spread. Selection of cheeses, olives, side dishes, salads, breads like Christopsomo (or "Christ's Bread") as well as other Greek sweets and coffees complete the holiday table.

There is a food custom leading up to New Years that is the Vasilopitam, the cutting of the New Year's Eve bread for which it is named after. The Vasilopita is baked with a coin inserted in the dough. Should you end up

choosing the slice with the coin, it is believed that you will receive good fortune. After the New Year's Eve meal is done, the wife of each household puts together her own spread of food. This spread includes traditional Greek items such as nuts, fruits (dried and fresh), and nuts. It is said that the Greek Santa Claus (also known as St. Basil) will pass through each household and taste and bless the food that is laid out. His food blessings are believed to endure and provide abundance throughout the New Year.

I come from a very unique culture having been born and raised in Hawai'i. There are many ethnicities that make up the culture of Hawai'i. The most predominant ethnicities are Hawaiian, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, and Portuguese just to name a few. This is one state where the "minorities" actually make up the "majority".

Easter in Hawai'i is very much "Americanized" with your standard Easter buffets and egg hunts. However, in keeping with our culture, our buffets are not only laden with typical buffet fare, you can also find a heavy presence of fish as we are lucky to be surrounded by water and have access to fresh fish unlike the majority of other American states. Most often, these Easter buffets include entertainment of local Hawaiian musical acts.

Our Christmas/New Years do not include mounds of hot chocolate, eggnogs or fireplace activities. We are very fortunate to have an average of 80 degree weather through the entire year. Christmas luaus are popular. A luau is a traditional Hawaiian feast, which includes poi, which is taro pounded out into a paste; Kalua pig, which is wrapped in ti leaf and placed in a makeshift underground oven for several hours; laulau, which consists of fish and pork

wrapped in ti leaf and steamed; Chicken Long Rice, Chicken Hekka, Squid Luau, and Haupia, a coconut dessert. Fruits, Salads, Bread, and Desserts finish off this grand buffet. In the households, you can most often find the typical turkey and stuffing. But, you will also find foods relevant to the ethnicities that make Hawai'i what it is.

My Easter, Thanksgiving/Christmas/New Year's Eve table consists of rice, pansit (Filipino noodles), turkey with stuffing and gravy, adobo, pinakbet (a Filipino/Ilocano dish of vegetables and fish cooked in bago'ong), baked yams, fish (fried and baked), Kim Chee (Korean fermented cabbage), Poke (Hawaiian cubed fish tossed with seaweed, Hawaiian salt, shoyu, and other seasonings), Mochiko chicken (chicken coated in Mochiko flour, which is a Japanese rice flour), breaded shrimp, pan sushi, Dry Mein (Chinese noodles), just to give you an example. As you can see this table features a variety of cuisines from the typical American to Filipino to Hawaiian to Japanese to Chinese to Korean. This is just a sample of what is considered "normal" food for our culture. It all blends together harmoniously. This is very typical of many households during the holidays or any celebration. While other cultures may have a table full of food indicative of their own ethnicity, the culture in Hawai'i is the exact opposite. We are the epitome of a melting pot and it definitely shows in our cuisine. This can be attributed to the Plantation era days where the prominent ethnicities we have now were brought into Hawai'i to work in the fields. During lunch breaks, everyone would share their foods with one another. This is what started our local cuisine - a melting pot of ethnic foods rolled into one.

Throughout this project our group has discussed many things. We have discussed everything from the major Greek holidays to cultural etiquette. We have discussed many more topics such as food service styles, how food is prepared, how food is consumed and therapeutic uses of food and wine. While working on this project I know that I have gained such an appreciation for the Greek culture. I can't speak on behalf of the other members of my group but it seems as if they have gained an appreciation as well. I have never really thought about the Greek culture until working on this project. I find it so interesting and everything about it amazes me. They put so much hard work into all of their meals and it really shows. I never knew how much work and what a big deal their meals are.

I believe that in present times a lot of people want to cook in as little of time as possible. Most people don't want to spend half of the day preparing and cooking food. This is so different from the Greek culture because they value their meals and spend so much time preparing them. They don't feel the need to rush and I give them a lot of credit for that. I really like the fact that they don't put much pressure on finishing quick and it is more about the overall taste when the food is finished. After working on this project our group has gained a big sense of what the Greek culture is about. We now know more about the significance of holidays as well as the importance of wine in the Greek culture. My group walked in to this project not knowing much about the Greek culture but now we can walk away with a great sense of what it is all about.

The history of the Greeks in San Francisco dates back to the late 1880s and what was the beginning of the Gold Rush period. This would be the heaviest

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concentration of Greeks in the West Coast. Several hundred Greek immigrants were living in San Francisco by the early 1900s. George Daskarolis writes, " As San Francisco's Greek-speaking population increased, it extended its boundaries along Third Street between Harrison and Market streets in the district called South of Market. For nearly half a century, 1905-1945, this area was to contain the heart of Greek town, a community of immigrants and their families representing one of a score of ethnic " cities within a city," as well as a central reference point for residents of smaller Greek communities throughout Northern California." However, the Greeks in San Francisco currently do not have an entire neighborhood to call their own, unlike the Russians (Russian Hill), Chinese (Chinatown), Latinos (Mission) or Japanese (Japantown). Although, SOMA is not known to be a predominately Greek neighborhood there seems to be many of them around this area. Robert Wilson also touches on this particular neighborhood.

He says, " If you want to find the social center of San Francisco's Greek colony you will immediately set out for the coffee house in the vicinity of Third and Folsom streets. There is a Greek population here of approximately 11, 500 and there are 26 coffee houses patronized almost exclusively by Greeks. The Athenians used to talk politics, religion, philosophy in the streets and market places; the coffee house offers the modern forum and club. Here you find " coffee and - not " coffee and doughnuts," but coffee and conversation." As currently seen on Yelp, there are approximately 51 Greek or Mediterranean restaurants, cafes, and coffee houses scattered everywhere in San Francisco, most of which are seen in Russian Hill/North Beach/Union Square/South Beach/Embarcadero/ and Mission neighborhoods

and only a few of them located in SOMA. This would seem as though the Greek colony in SOMA as mentioned by George Daskarolis and Robert Wilson has since dispersed and have taken their talents and presence all over San Francisco.

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