

ΚΑΛΙ-ΦΑΓΙΑ: CRETAN VILLAGE FOOD

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The roots of Cretan cooking, as it is practiced still in the villages, are from the Minoans times of several millennia ago!

For the past 10 years, our family has been spending summers in a village underneath the Lasithi range of mountains. Avdou is a typical Cretan village with old medieval serpentine lanes and small houses connected to each other. It is a paradise of fresh produce, olive groves for virgin oil, grape vineyards for the annual supply of wine and tsikoudia [*raki*], "*klimataria*" of hanging grapes for eating, fruit trees for healthy deserts, watered gardens for fresh vegetables, wild berries covering the



property fences, and a profusion of flowers. It is here where we become the beneficiaries of the Cretan hospitality. Several times in a week, our neighbors will share some of their cooking, bringing us a plate of their day's lunch. Usually, the plates will be one of the following dishes.

Snails with Ground Wheat [*Κοχλολι με Χονδρο*]. **INGREDIENTS:** 1 kilo of snails, ½ kilo of coarsely ground wheat, 2 medium yellow onions, diced 1 large zucchini, diced, 5 very ripe tomatoes, diced, 2 cups olive oil, 3 cups water, salt/pepper to taste. **COOKING:** The snails should be boiled for 10 minutes, and then strained. Change the water, and then boil again for 10 minutes. Rinse the snails in cold water, then clean them (they remain in their shells!) and put them in a large stock-pot with the olive oil, onions, zucchini and tomatoes. Add two cups of water and let simmer for 30 minutes. Remove the snails and put them aside. Add the last cup of water to the pot and bring it to a boil. Add the wheat and turn down the heat to simmer. Stir constantly until the wheat softens. Finally, stir in the snails, add salt, and pepper to taste.

Stuffed Zucchini Flowers [*Ντολμαδες με Κολοκιθοανθους*] **INGREDIENTS:** 30 – 40 zucchini flowers, 1 lb. rice, 1 cup olive oil, 4 ripe tomatoes, 1 onion, 1 bunch each: parsley, mint, dill, salt/pepper. The zucchini flowers must be picked in the morning, so they are open! **COOKING:** Wash the flowers and prepare the filling by chopping the parsley, mint, dill, onions and tomatoes, very finely. Add the olive oil, rice, salt and pepper, and mix well. Stuff the flowers and then place them in a pot. Cover them in water and place a plate over them to keep them from opening while cooking. Simmer on low heat until rice is cooked.