

IKARIAN LONGEVITY MEAL

The Blue Zone of Ikaria, Greece has its own unique spin on the Mediterranean diet—with a heavy emphasis on home-grown, seasonally produced, vegetables—with lots of beans, goats milk, anti-oxidant rich olive oils, wild greens, and locally sourced honey. Meat and fish is reserved for only special occasions, and even then eaten small portions. This diet, combined with an active lifestyle and strong connection to family and broader community all contribute to their longevity and amazing vitality late into life.

Try making the recipes provided to create your own Ikarian meal. Serve them with some sourdough bread and anti-oxidant rich red wine, and you'll have yourself a meal that will keep friends and family coming back for more.

Ikarian Stew
Horta—Longevity Greens
Greek Salad
Baked Ikarian Chickpeas

IKARIAN STEW

Yield: 4 servings

This savory one-pot meal fuses the iconic flavors of Ikaria with the faintest hint of sweet fennel. As is customary in Ikaria, a small amount of olive oil is used to sauté the vegetables, then a generous drizzle finishes the dish. This practice is instinctively brilliant. Heat breaks down the oil, so saving most for a final drizzle assures its rich flavor and maximum health benefits. This protein-rich stew freezes well, though the kale will lose a little of its vibrancy. To refresh, add a few more slivered leaves when reheating.

2 cups dried black-eyed peas
½ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, diced (about 1 ½ cups)
1 medium fennel bulb, trimmed, halved, and sliced into thin strips
2 teaspoons minced garlic
3 large carrots, peeled and chopped (about 1 cup)
1 large red globe, beefsteak, or heirloom tomato, diced (about ¾ cup)
2 tablespoons tomato paste
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon salt
4 large kale leaves, slivered
½ cup chopped fresh dill

1. Spread the black-eyed peas on a large baking sheet and pick over to remove any damaged peas or debris. Put the peas in a large pot, add enough cool tap water to submerge by 2 inches, and bring to a boil over high heat. Boil for 1 minute. Set aside off the heat and soak for 1 hour. Drain and set aside.
2. Warm ¼ cup oil in a large stock pot or Dutch oven set over medium heat. Add the onion and fennel; cook, stirring often, until soft (about 8 minutes). Add the garlic, tomato, tomato paste, bay leaves, and salt until the tomato paste dissolves. Add enough water just to cover the vegetables. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil.
3. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer slowly until the black-eyed peas are tender (not rocklike, not mush), about 50 minutes.
4. Stir in the kale leaves and dill. Cover and cook until the kale is tender, 5 to 10 minutes. Discard the bay leaves. Ladle into four bowls. Drizzle 1 tablespoon olive oil on top of each helping.

TIP: For a quicker meal, substitute four cups frozen black-eyed peas (thawed) or four cups drained and rinsed canned black-eyed peas—and skip step 1. Simmer the stew in step 3 for only 25 minutes to blend the flavors and cook the fennel. Complete step 4. as directed.

HORTA—LONGEVITY GREENS

Yield: 3-4 servings (as a side)

Hortogagos is Greek for vegetarian. Loosely translated, it means “weed eater.” On Ikaria, cooked greens are synonymous with weeds—that is wild greens. And with more than 150 varieties of edible greens growing on the island, it’s no wonder Ikarians eat them most days. They often reserve the cooking water to make tea with lemon. (You can also freeze the water to use as a vegetable broth). You don’t have to forage in the nearest field to enjoy horta. Your local super market or farmers market offers many choices. These qualify as among the world’s healthiest foods.

8 cups mixed leafy greens, such as spinach, dandelion greens, chard, mustard greens, collards, kale, escarole, or beet greens—roughly chopped
 ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Submerge and agitate the greens in a large bowl of cold water. Set aside for a few minutes, then lift the greens out with tongs or your cleaned hands, leaving the water and any sediment behind. Repeat until there’s no sand or grit in the bowl.
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add the greens, submerge with a wooden spoon, and cook, uncovered, until wilted, just a minute or two.

3. Drain in a large colander set in the sink, reserving some of the water to make tea, if desired. Transfer to serving platter or bowl. Drizzle with olive oils and lemon, and then season with salt and pepper to serve.

TIP: Collard greens, mustard greens, turnip greens, and kale should be stemmed before cooking.

GREEK SALAD

Yield: Serves 4 as a main dish, 8-10 as a side dish

This meal-in-one vegetarian salad is about as good as it gets. Serve it with sourdough bread to dip in olive oil.

- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 8 cups field greens, such as a packaged mesclun mix or a mix of baby greens like arugula, kale, or red-leaf lettuce
- 3 medium red globe, beefsteak, or heirloom tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1 (12.75 oz.) can artichoke hearts packed in water, drained and cut into quarters
- 8 cooked and drained small creamer or white potatoes, cut in half (optional)
- 1 cup soaked, cooked, and drained chickpeas or drained and rinsed canned chickpeas
- 1 large red bell pepper, stemmed, cored, and cut into ¼ inch-thick rounds
- 1 small red onion, sliced into paper-thin rings
- ¼ cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- Klamath olives, for garnish
- Crumbled feta cheese, for garnish
- 4 hard-cooked eggs, peeled and quartered (optional)

1. Whisk the vinegar and mustard in a large salad bowl until creamy. Whisk in the oil in a slow, steady stream; whisk in the rosemary, salt, and pepper until uniform.
2. Add the field greens tomatoes, artichoke hearts, potatoes (if using), chickpeas, bell pepper, cucumber, onion, mint leaves, and oregano. Toss gently but well to coat.
3. Top with olives, feta cheese and, if desired, hard-boiled eggs.

BAKED IKARIAN CHICKPEAS

Yield: 6 servings (as a side)

Ikarians eat a variation of the Mediterranean diet, with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, potatoes, and olive oil—which contains cholesterol-lowering mono-unsaturated fats. Try these delicious baked chickpeas.

And don't forget the olive oil!

- 1 pound dried chickpeas
- 1 medium zucchini (about 5 oz.) diced
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and diced (about ½ cup)
- 1 small yellow or white onion, diced (about ½ cup)
- ½ cup extra virgin olive-oil
- 2 tablespoons packed fresh mint leaves, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Soak the chickpeas in a big bowl of water at room temperature for at least 8 hours or up to 16 hours
2. Drain in a colander set in the sink. Pour the chickpeas into a large saucepan and add enough cool water so they're submerged by 2 inches. Bring to a boil over high heat. Boil for 5 minutes, and then drain in a colander set in the sink.
3. Return the chickpeas to the pot, cover with the same amount of fresh water and bring back to a boil over high heat. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook until tender, about 45 minutes. Scoop out 1 cup cooking liquid and set aside. Drain the remainder in a colander set in the sink.
4. Position the rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.
5. Stir the zucchini, carrots, onion, olive oil, and mint in a large roasting pan. Pour the drained chickpeas evenly over the vegetables; pour in the reserved 1 cup cooking liquid.
6. Roast undisturbed until the vegetables are tender and the chickpeas are lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Stir in the salt and pepper. Set aside at room temperature for 5 minutes to blend the flavors before serving.