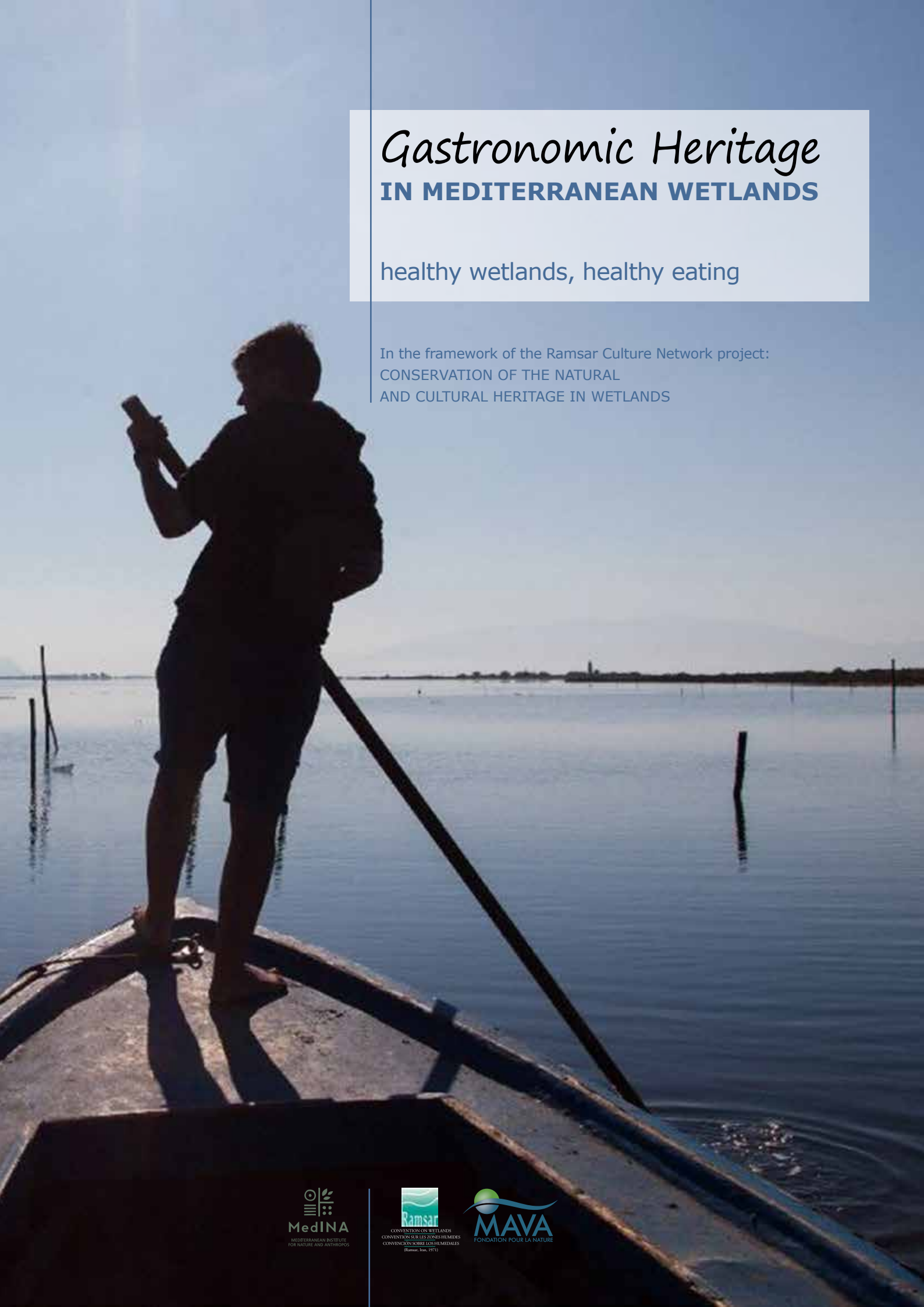
Gastronomic Heritage
IN MEDITERRANEAN WETLANDS

healthy wetlands, healthy eating

In the framework of the Ramsar Culture Network project:
CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL
AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN WETLANDS



MedINA
MEDITERRANEAN INSTITUTE FOR NATURE AND ANTHROPOS

Ramsar
CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

MAVA
FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

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Prespa Lakes, Greece.

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Flamingos at Chikly Island, Tunis, Tunisia.

Introduction

The concept of culture contributing to the sustainable use and effective conservation of wetlands was strongly argued in the framework of MedWet, during the 1990s. This first regional initiative of the Convention on Wetlands, proceeded to promote the concept at the level of the Ramsar Conferences of the Parties (COPs).

The main argument was that taking into account the cultural aspects of wetlands would contribute decisively to strengthening the links of human societies to these invaluable ecosystems, especially with inhabitants working and residing in their vicinity. Therefore, it made sense to incorporate cultural aspects in the integrated management of wetlands.

Mobilising states, organisations and experts, this campaign led to the approval of two Ramsar COP resolutions on the inclusion of culture in managing wetlands (Res. VIII.19 at COP8 in Valencia, Spain and Res. IX.21 at COP9 in Kampala, Uganda). It also led to the dissemination of the Ramsar Guidance on Culture and Wetlands in 2008. Further work was carried out in the framework of the Ramsar Convention by its Culture Working Group and by the Ramsar Culture Network, both supported financially by the Swiss MAVA Foundation.

In 2003, the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropos (MedINA) was established in Athens, Greece. Besides sacred natural sites and landscapes, its activities focussed primarily on wetlands. In its publications it included gastronomy based on wetland products, as it recognised the major role of these products in human consumption and in the improvement of subsistence and the quality of life. It should be noted that wetland products, and recipes based on them, were known and were developed since ancient times, while their use has remained uninterrupted.

The new publication on wetland gastronomy –promoted by the Ramsar Culture Network with MAVA funding– aims at renewing interest in the alimentary use of wetland resources in a framework of sustainability and thus adding one more convincing argument for their conservation and wise use.

Thymio Papayannis
Ramsar Senior Advisor on Culture and Wetlands

The artificial reservoir of Lake Karla, Region of Thessaly, Greece.

Traditional boats and huts in Neretva Delta, Croatia.

Traditional activities and iconic wetland products

Archaeological evidence testifies the close relationship between human beings and water since prehistoric times, especially the relation between human habitation and wetlands (Braudel, 1995). After humans left their cave dwellings and started to look for places to build their shelters, locations near water were their first choice.

The ecological importance of wetlands is well known. They protect and improve water quality, maintain intricate relationships with other watershed ecosystems, consist crucial wildlife environments for birds and fish, store floodwaters and retain surface water flow during dry periods. However, at the same time, wetlands have been providing fundamental support for human societies, being the best sources of water, food and building materials. Especially in the past, they were also ideal environments for effective protection from enemies, they allowed communication and eased transportation. Most of these functions are still rather relevant today.

To begin with, wetlands provided valuable building materials such as mud, reeds, timber, etc. which are still in use in many parts of the Mediterranean Basin. They also attracted humans very early in history for security and defence reasons. In their attempt to protect themselves from hostile tribes and wild animals, people built huts on wooden platforms above water. The platforms were based on wooden poles stuck on the bottom of lakes, not too far away from the shore, and were connected to it by small bridges that could be withdrawn in the face of danger.

Wetlands also served as communication and transportation corridors (Touloumis, 2002). Wooden boats and rafts made transportation easier, safer and much faster. Wetlands also inspired and facilitated the development of knowledge and technology related to water, such as boat building, navigation techniques, water mills, water saws, etc. A great number of civilisations were born in the valleys of great rivers such as the Tigris, Euphrates and the Nile. The development of technology and nautical tradition contributed to the transformation of many settlements built around wetlands, especially those in river estuaries, into great transportation, trade and civilisation centres (Theodoulou, 2011).

Agricultural activities in wetland sites, Ghar el Melh, Tunisia.

Prominent among the services provided by wetlands has been nutrition. Mediterranean wetlands have been a major food provider and central to people's lives when it came to fulfilling their subsidence needs. What better places to look for food than wetlands? Animals that used wetlands for water were easy prey, especially for early humans with primitive hunting tools. Wetlands were also great sources for plenty of fish and molluscs, whereas their fertile land offered plants and fruits in abundance. When agriculture was later developed, the same fertile lands were used for the first crops, taking advantage of the ease of irrigation they provided.

All resources that wetlands could offer were used since antiquity: plants, animals, soil and water. These products were originally used for people's survival and later on, after societal and technological advances, they also provided people the opportunity to accumulate wealth. Wetland resources were also a source of inspiration for the development of several methods, tools and techniques associated with food, a cultural wealth distinct for each region. Later in this publication, the reader will discover a number of characteristic recipes with wetland ingredients from around the Mediterranean, based on these methods and techniques, which are part of the gastronomic heritage of the areas they come from. They are based on the iconic wetland products presented below.

FISH AND MOLLUSCS

Fishing was central to people's diet since ancient times, as testified by the fish bones and shells found during archaeological excavations. Dwellers of caves in France 16.000 years ago depicted fishing scenes and so did ancient Egyptians, ancient Greeks, and Romans. With thousands of kilometres of coasts around the Mediterranean basin, and in its numerous lakes and rivers, a many fishing techniques were developed as societies evolved over time, resulting in an incredible cultural wealth that passed on from generation to generation. Today, fish, molluscs and their products such as fish roe (an esteemed delicacy made of salted, cured fish roe pouch of Bluefin tuna [*T. thynnus*], Flathead mullet [*Mugil cephalus*], or Swordfish [*Xiphias gladius*]) are among the most prominent foods associated with wetlands. They are key ingredients in recipes from all over the Mediterranean, from the wetlands of Cyprus to the islands of Tunisia, cooked in a variety of ways.

The lagoon of Orbetello in the province of Grosseto (Tuscany), Italy.

GAME

Archaeological evidence testify that our remote ancestors were already hunting in wetlands from the Early Palaeolithic era (Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2001a). From the Neolithic Period there is already evidence that people hunted birds. Egyptians respected greatly the animals they hunted, and ancient Greeks enjoyed delicacies such as Wild Guinea fowl and all kinds of small birds, Pheasant, Quail, as well as Seagulls and Pelicans. Romans considered hunting to be a sport and only the privileged could enjoy game. Those who defied this rule were often punished with death (Toussaint-Samat, 1992). Nowadays, hunting is still widespread, even when most people no longer rely on game for their subsistence. However, the regulations that are set in place must be strictly respected. In certain sites, such as in the Camargue, France, hunting is a very well organised economic activity, as wealthy persons rent large plots of land in order to hunt.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The fertile and arable lands near wetlands support many cultivations. Rice, a characteristic wetland product as it requires large amounts of water, was cultivated in the Mediterranean region since Roman times, although it became a staple food only after the Arab invasion. The role of rice in human diets is huge: it provides 20% of their dietary energy needs (WWT, 2008). And it is central to the diet of 3 billion people world-wide (Ramsar Convention Secretariat, 2001b). Rice is used in cooking (to make specific dishes, as well as flours, starches and thickenings), however it has also industrial uses (in cosmetics, paper, plastics and straw manufacturing). People also attribute to rice many symbolic qualities, such as fertility and abundance. The Mediterranean boasts of two very important rice cultivation areas, the Camargue in southern France and the Albufera de Valencia in eastern Spain.

Wheat, barley, and other varieties of cereals are used for animal fodder are also popular crops. Wheat dominates the Mediterranean diet, as wheat flour is the most basic ingredient of a great number of popular foods, such as breads, pastas and pastry. Easy access of water also allowed for the cultivation of other agricultural products, e.g. legumes (such as the famous Prespa beans), vegetables, and fruits, as well as grapevines (as in the Neretva Delta in Croatia).

The Larnaka Salt Lakes are located at the southwest part of the town of Larnaka.

WILD GREENS, HERBS AND MEDICINAL PLANTS

Another category of plants that abound around wetlands are wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants. The latter vary immensely in variety and specific qualities as the soil and other environmental factors (such as isolation) may differentiate and boost their healing properties. Humans from early on took advantage of the plethora of wild greens and herbs that were growing near wetlands and included them in their diet. Mushrooms, wild asparagus, and numerous varieties of edible leaves are important constituents of many traditional recipes. It is customary in many areas of the Mediterranean (such as Italy, Greece, and Cyprus) to go to the fields in spring and gather different kinds of edible wild greens. Wild greens are attributed with medicinal and therapeutic properties and it has been scientifically proven that they can help in the healing of several diseases. Wild herbs have been also credited with similar qualities and are used either as spices or in herbal teas.

MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCTS

Water abundance also allowed for the breeding of many animals, such as bulls, sheep, goats, as well as pigs. Animal husbandry started with the Neolithic revolution, when animals were first domesticated. They graze on the lands that aren't used for other cultivations and have ample quantities of water to drink. Buffalos in particular, help the management of reeds, upon which they feed, creating a suitable spawning environment for fish, which in turn attract waterfowl. Characteristic examples are the native bull breeds of the Camargue in France and Prespa Lakes in Greece, FYR of Macedonia and Albania. Meat is used in many traditional recipes, especially in the northern Mediterranean, where water is less scarce. A great variety of dairy products are also used in many traditional recipes (Lyratzaki, 2011). Cheese and yogurt give their distinct taste to characteristic dishes and they are also consumed on their own as starters or deserts. Buffalo milk, for example, makes wonderful ice cream and pastries (in northern Greece and Turkey) and tasty cheese, such as ricotta and mozzarella (in Italy).

Fisherman in Messolonghi Lagoon.

SALT

Salt is another iconic wetland product. It has been used since antiquity as a flavour enhancer, as a substance vital to human health, but also as one of the most convenient food preservative methods before the discovery of electricity. Originally it was harvested by hand from rock cavities near the sea, but as people's knowledge and creativity grew, people started to take full advantage of what nature could offer by assisting the natural processes with the creation of salt pans. Salt has been called the 'white gold' and in the Mediterranean it has shaped history and contributed to the creation of human settlements, transportation and trade routes. It has also helped the creation of incredibly rich cultural heritage with the manufacturing of tools, engineering devices, buildings and other architectural heritage. Characteristic examples of artisan salt pans in Mediterranean today are those of Sečovlje Salina, which is also a Nature Park, in Slovenia and Castro Marim in Portugal.

Salt also enriched local cultures by creating symbolic meanings, vocabulary idioms, place names, sophisticated morals and customs. The unique characteristics of natural and man-made salinas are incredibly significant as they support a unique biodiversity, which features amazing survival mechanisms, distinctive microscopic flora and fauna, halophytes and large bird communities. Salt is used in all recipes around the world but is also used in traditional Mediterranean dishes during as a cooking technique (Hueso and Petanidou, 2011).

"Catch of the day" blackboard.

Starters

Cooking with wetland ingredients

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TURKEY

Seytan Sofrasi (Devil's Table), Balikesir-Ayvalik

SERVES 6

1 kg spurge (sütleğen otu)
1 kg common sorrel (kuzu kulağı otu)
1 kg radicchio (radika)
1 kg patience dock (labada)
3 lemons, juiced
1 cup of olive oil
250 gr full-fat cheese (e.g. feta cheese)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	91.5
Protein (gr)	2.5
Fat (gr)	8
Carbohydrates (gr)	3.5
of which sugars	0.5
Fibre	2

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Zehra Kurtarir
Facilitator: Erhan Kurtarir

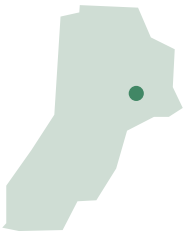
Spring salad

- Wash and clean the wild greens thoroughly and remove any hard stems.
- Put them in boiling water for 3 minutes, with plenty of salt.
- Grate the garlic, mix the lemon juice with the olive oil, and put them in a tightly closed container.
- Shake until well combined.
- Place the vegetables on a plate, sprinkle the cheese crumbled over before pouring the salad dressing, and serve.

Starters

LEBANON

Hima Kfar Zabad Wetland



SERVES 2

1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
Pinch of salt
Pinch of Pepper
1 ½ tablespoons of olive oil
1 cup of purslane leaves
1 lemon (juiced)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	151
Protein (gr)	1
Fat (gr)	14
Carbohydrates (gr)	7
of which sugars	-
Fibre	1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal herbs

Author: Shalimar Sinno

Purslane in olive oil

[Farfahina or Ba'leh]

- Pick the purslane leaves from the stem.
- Wash and chop them well.
- In a frying pan, put some olive oil and sauté the onions.
- When they turn golden-brown, add the purslane, salt and pepper, and keep stirring over low heat until they wilt. Remove the pan from the heat and let it cool down.
- Then, add the lemon juice and serve with toasted bread.

Starters

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

The plant is very popular around Middle-Eastern wetlands. It has smooth reddish stems and alternate leaves clustered at stem joints and ends. It blooms a five-petal yellow flower of approximately 0.24 inch wide.

CYPRUS

Larnaka Salt Lakes [Ramsar Site]

MAKES 10 FLAOUNES

Filling

750 gr "pafitiko" cheese
(for substitutes see "Tips & Interesting facts" below)
250 gr finely grated halloumi cheese
½ teaspoon of mastic powder
½ teaspoon of nutmeg powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
$^{2}/_{3}$ cup fresh mint leaves finely chopped
100 gr leavened bread
4 eggs
½ cup of raisins (optional)
1 teaspoon of saffron

Dough

1 kg strong (yellow) flour (Durum flour)
100 gr leavened bread or 2 tablespoons of dry yeast
1 cup vegetable oil
½ tablespoon of salt
1 tablespoon mastic powder
1 tablespoon of mehlep powder
2 eggs (for glazing)
3 cups of milk or lukewarm water
1 ½ tablespoons of dry yeast
Sesame seeds (for topping)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	325
Protein (gr)	16
Fat (gr)	17
Carbohydrates (gr)	27
of which sugars	-
Fibre	1.2

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Agricultural products

Author: Maria Tillirou
Facilitator: Yiota Vasileiou

Cypriot Easter cheese bread

[Flaounes]

The making of the flaounes starts one day before baking.

- **Filling**: In a large bowl mix together the cheeses, mint, mastic powder and mehlep powder. In another bowl whisk the eggs well, and start adding gradually the cheese mixture. Mix well. The blend should not be running, so add some more cheese if necessary. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let rest overnight at room temperature. In the morning, add the baking powder and mix well. Cover the bowl with a kitchen towel and leave to rest until the dough is ready.

- **Dough**: In a large bowl mix the flour, mastic powder, mehlep powder and salt. Add the vegetable oil and knead the mixture. Dissolve the yeast with ½ cup of lukewarm milk and ½ tablespoon of sugar in a small bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let it rise in a warm place for about 15 minutes until it starts foaming.

  Warm the remaining milk and sugar at low heat and place it in a large bowl. Whisk the eggs and add them to the milk. Keep this mixture warm until the yeast mixture has foamed. Then, add it to the flour mixture. Start mixing the remaining milk blend slowly with the yeast and flour mixture, kneading the dough until it becomes smooth and elastic. Place the dough in a bowl, cover it with a blanket and let it rise for 2 hours in a warm place.

  Wash and dry the sesame. Place it in a big bowl or spread it on a clean table or counter top. With a tennis ball sized piece of dough, make a small, 10 x 15 cm and ½ cm thick, rectangular pie. Press the external piece of dough on the sesame seeds. Fill its centre with approximately a handful of the flaouna cheese filling. Turn over the dough edges towards the filling to create a square shaped pie, but do not cover the centre completely. You should be able to see the cheese mixture from the top. Press the sides lightly with a fork to hold them in place. Using a brush, glaze the top of the flaouna with the whisked eggs. Place the flaounes in rows on a shallow baking tray, and bake them in a preheated oven (200°C) for approximately 45-60 minutes.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

"Pafitiko" cheese is a type of seasonal cheese made by sheep and goat's milk, only in the region on Pafos, Cyprus. Some alternative options can be Greek kefalotyri, parmigiana or pecorino cheese.

PORTUGAL

Sado River [Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

Eels

1 kg small eels
1 lemon juiced
Salt to taste
2 tablespoons of olive oil for frying the eels

Açorda

250 gr clams
150 gr spinach leaves
200 gr traditional bread, sliced
½ medium onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, peeled
50 gr cilantro, chopped
1 bay leaf
2-3 tablespoons of olive oil
Salt to taste
1 cup water

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	23
Protein (gr)	16
Fat (gr)	14
Carbohydrates (gr)	9
of which sugars	0.08
Fibre	0.5

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Helena Fidélis
Facilitator: Alexandra Batista

Bread soup with clams and eels

[Açorda soup]

- **Fried eels**: Clean the eels and season with salt and lemon juice. Marinate for 2 hours in the fridge.

  Place olive oil in a frying pan and allow to heat up. Pat the eels dry with paper towel.

  Add the eels to the pan and let them fry for 5-6 minutes until they are crispy. These are served as an accompaniment with the Açorda.

- **Açorda**: Place the olive oil, garlic, onion and bay leaf in a pot and sauté until the onion is transparent but not browned.

  Add the spinach and water, cover and let simmer for 5 minutes.

  Add clams, cover and turn off the burner. The residual heat of the pot will allow the clams to be cooked to perfection.

  Place a slice of bread in each soup bowl and spoon the clam and spinach mixture over.

  Serve hot. This dish is best served with bread, olives and a glass of chilled white wine.

ITALY

Orbetello Lagoon
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

1 onion, diced
4 cloves of garlic, minced
1 celery stalk, sliced
6 tomatoes, chopped
4 large potatoes
500 gr cauliflower
5-6 leaves of chard
600 gr of female crabs (femminelle)
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	63
Protein (gr)	5.6
Fat (gr)	1.3
Carbohydrates (gr)	7.6
of which sugars	0.6
Fibre	5.2

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Mauro Lenzi
Facilitator: Fabio Cianchi

Female crabs soup

[Femminelle soup]

- Prepare a light sauté with the onion, garlic and celery. Add a little water and the tomato. Leave them to cook for a few minutes; then, add 2 liters of water and bring to a boil.
- Add the potatoes, the cauliflower and the chard leaves, in small pieces. Check the pot occasionally to add water if necessary and to remove the froth with a wooden spoon.
- When the vegetables are ready, remove the claws and limbs from the femminelle and place them in the pot. Leave them to cook for about fifteen minutes until the crabs turn red and the soup thickens.
- The dish is served very hot, with a slice of toasted garlic bread. Before you enjoy this delicacy, a spoonful of extra virgin olive oil should be added. You can use your knife to crack the femminelle open so you can get at the eggs inside them while tasting the soup, or at the end of the meal in order to enjoy the soup while it is still hot.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Putting the femminelle in the freezer, for 1-2 hours before you start cooking, will generally kill most of them and unnecessary suffering will be avoided.

This is a typical meal of the Orbetello area, especially of the local families of fishermen. It is an autumn meal as during that period the lagoon crabs (*Carcinus aestuarii*) are in reproduction and females have the cephalothorax full of eggs. Only female crabs are used for this recipe (the term femminelle means small females in Italian). The shape of the abdomen or tail flat is a thin triangular apron for males, while the female's is larger and rounder. In any case, if you love the claws then choose male whereas if the tail is your favourite part buy female. Yet, for this recipe female crabs are required.

There are different versions of this soup, i.e. one with rice, another with a few pieces of skinned eel, etc. In essence, there is not a single "original" recipe; they vary depending on the creativity of older housewives, the availability of ingredients, etc. This recipe is the simplest and perhaps the tastier version of the femminelle soup.

TURKEY

Lake Iznik, Bursa

SERVES 4

500 gr of shelled crayfish

3 green peppers

4 tomatoes

2 cloves of garlic, minced

2 bay leaves

1 lemon, sliced

1 bowl of mushrooms, chopped
(or whole if they are small-sized)

Black peppercorn

Olive oil

Salt

Cheddar cheese, grated

1 bunch of parsley, chopped

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	91
Protein (gr)	8
Fat (gr)	5
Carbohydrates (gr)	2.5
of which sugars	1.5
Fibre	1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Zehra Kurtarir
Facilitator: Erhan Kurtarir

Crayfish with cheese

- Clean the crayfish and wash them well.
- Put them in a pot of boiling water for 5-10 minutes and remove from heat.
- Heat some olive oil in a frying pan and sauté the chopped mushrooms, the garlic, the bay leaves and the black peppercorn.
- Add the crayfish, the green peppers, the chopped tomatoes and the sliced lemon. Let the mixture cook for 3-4 minutes over high heat.
- Then, place it in an earthenware pot, sprinkle with cheese and put it in a preheated oven (200°) for about 5 minutes.
- Remove from the oven, sprinkle the chopped parsley on top, and serve.
- Bon appétit.

Starters

GREECE

Lychna Wetland

SERVES 4

3 large crabs

2 spring onions, sliced

1 clove fresh garlic

½ bunch of fennel, chopped

½ bunch of hartwort, chopped

45 ml pure olive oil

20 ml ouzo or any other liquor flavoured with anise (optionally)

Salt

Pepper

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	100
Protein (gr)	17.5
Fat (gr)	2.5
Carbohydrates (gr)	0.2
of which sugars	-
Fibre	-

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Sofi Chapsi

Crabs with herbs

- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Sauté the onions for 2 minutes then add the garlic and continue cooking for another minute.
- Add the fennel and hartwort and sauté for another minute.
- Put the crabs in the pan.
- Add the ouzo and stir until the alcohol is evaporated.
- Put the lid tightly on the pan and leave them to cook for approximately 10 minutes.
- Remove from the heat. Serve on a large plate with big hunks of toasted whole-wheat bread to soak up all their delicious marinade.

Starters

CYPRUS

Limassol Salina

[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

500 gr wild asparagus (agrelia)
2 eggs
Salt
Pepper
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	131
Protein (gr)	3
Fat (gr)	15
Carbohydrates (gr)	3
of which sugars	1
Fibre	1.5

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Maria Tillirou
Facilitator: Yiota Vasileiou

Wild asparagus omelette

["Agrelia" omelette]

- Rinse the wild asparagus under running water.
- Blanch them in boiling water for 1-2 minutes and then let them dry.
- Gently beat the eggs together in a mixing bowl and season with salt and pepper.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Fry the wild asparagus for 1-2 minutes and then set aside.
- Pour the eggs into the same pan and as soon as the mixture starts setting add the wild asparagus. Let it cook for 5 minutes over low heat.
- The perfect omelette has a golden surface and it is very soft on the inside.

Starters

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

When collecting the wild asparagus, be careful not to uproot them so that they can grow again.

GREECE

Prespa Lakes
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 10

1 kg Prespa giant/elephant beans
1 large onion or 2 medium ones
2 fresh tomatoes
1 table spoon of tomato puree
1 carrot
100 gr celery leaves
50 gr salt
5 gr red sweet pepper
5 gr black pepper
1 tea spoon of dried mint
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	160
Protein (gr)	6.6
Fat (gr)	8.2
Carbohydrates (gr)	16
of which sugars	2
Fibre	7.3

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Agricultural products

Author: Aleka Patsea
Facilitator: Ritsa Patsea

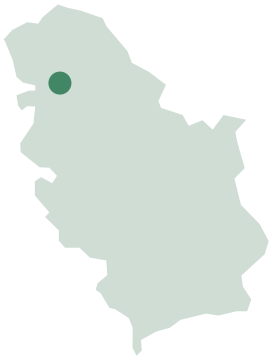
Baked "elephant" beans

[Gigantes tava]

- Soak the beans overnight. Discard soaking water and rinse the beans well.
- Put them into a pot and cover with plenty of water. Bring to a boil and then simmer for about 45 minutes.
- Place them in a pan.
- In a frying pan, sauté all other ingredients, except the dried mint, until soft and golden.
- Add the mix in the pan and sprinkle the dried mint on top.
- Place the pan in a preheated over (200°C) for approximately 70 minutes.
- Gigantes tava are served both hot and cold.

SERBIA

Koviljsko-Petrovaradinski rit



SERVES 4

500 gr chicken mushrooms or mushrooms of the woods
Vegetable oil, for frying
200 gr all-purpose flour
4 eggs, beaten and salted (to taste)
Salt
300 gr bread crumbs
Slices of bread (optional)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	126
Protein (gr)	6
Fat (gr)	1
Carbohydrates (gr)	23
of which sugars	2
Fibre	1.6

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Mila Vojnović
Facilitator: Svetlana Dingarac

Crumb-fried chicken mushrooms

["Mushrooms of the woods"]

- Wipe the chicken mushrooms with a damp cloth. Cut them into palm-sized pieces and boil them over low fire in a large pot of water for about 30 minutes, with the lid on. Remove from heat and drain them.
- Heat the vegetable oil in a frying pan. Be generous as the vegetable oil must cover the inner pan surface. Coat the chicken mushrooms in flour, then dip them in the whisked eggs. Follow with the bread crumbs and then dip them again in the whisked eggs.
- Place as many pieces in the pan as possible, but try not to have them touch each other. Fry on both sides until the batter turns golden-brown. Remove and drain on absorbent paper or slices of bread.
- Once they cool, transfer to a serving platter and optionally garnish the border of the platter with some salad greens.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Warning: if you pick wild mushrooms, go with someone who knows how to identify the edible species. If you are unsure about the mushrooms you have picked, consult an expert.

Chicken mushrooms or mushrooms of the woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) are usually foraged, and can be found growing on the barks of various trees, in the marshes along the coast of River Danube. Because it has the same texture as chicken, the mushroom has been called chicken-of-the-woods and considered a delicacy.

Chicken mushrooms or mushrooms of the woods grow in large clusters, from the late summer through autumn. They become harder and more brittle with age, so try to identify fresh young specimens. Also, look for caps that are juicy with a tender texture. Ideally they should ooze clear liquid when sliced.

ITALY

Orbetello Lagoon
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

400 gr pasta (spaghetti or short pasta)
Salt
Extra virgin olive oil
Bottarga of grey mullet, grated (for garnish)
Parsley

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	180
Protein (gr)	12
Fat (gr)	9
Carbohydrates (gr)	13
of which sugars	-
Fibre	-

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Mauro Lenzi
Facilitator: Massimo Bernacchini and Luigi Piro

Pasta with bottarga

[Fish roe]

The main ingredients of this very simple recipe are hard wheat pasta, extra virgin olive oil and bottarga (fish roe). The latter is the product of salting, drying and seasoning of grey mullet eggs (*Mugil cephalus*). Bottarga can be used not only as seasoning but also in fine slices over bread toasted croutons, buttered or oiled with extra virgin olive oil. For the pasta recipe, a seasoned bottarga is required, i.e. fresh bottarga must be removed from its vacuum sealed package and be left in the fridge until it hardens sufficiently.

The pasta must be cooked to perfection, *al dente* in Italian, with a little salt. Spaghetti is better suited, but short pasta or tagliatelle can also be used.

Once cooked, put the pasta in a bowl, add olive oil, a "generous" amount of grated bottarga and freshly chopped parsley. Mix all ingredients well and serve hot.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Mullet bottarga has its roots in the Spanish domination of the Orbetello area. In 1557, the King of Spain established the presidios. The presidi was not a state in the modern sense. Rather, it was a group of military units and Orbetello was the headquarters of State of Orbetello Presidia of the Tyrrhenian coast (16-18th century). It is said to be a Spanish custom to salt and store mullet eggs, which was eventually adapted by local fishermen. Bottarga is simply an end-result of the cultural exchanges of that era.

MALTA

Ghadira

SERVES 4 AS A STARTER

400 gr orecchetti or seashell-shaped type of pasta

Olive oil and butter

2 cloves garlic, chopped

500 gr peeled shrimps

4 roma tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced

1 glass of white wine

400 gr Salsola soda (haxixa ta' l-irmied in Maltese, or Smooth-leaved Saltwort, Barba di frate, Agretti or Barilla plant), prepared as instructed below and then roughly chopped

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	120
Protein (gr)	8.5
Fat (gr)	4.5
Carbohydrates (gr)	8.3
of which sugars	0.6
Fibre	3.8

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Matty Cremona
Facilitator: Elizabeth Conrad

Orecchetti with salsola soda

- **For Salsola soda**: The best way to prepare this vegetable is to first, cut off its roots and the hard part of the stalk, then cut off any shrivelled leaves and rinse very well. Blanch it in lightly salted water for 3-4 minutes and, then, plunge it into cold water to stop further cooking. It can be dressed with top quality olive oil and a squeeze of lemon, and served heaped on grilled bread as an antipasto.
- **For fried breadcrumbs**: Fry one clove of finely chopped garlic in two tablespoons of olive oil till softened, add two tablespoons of finely chopped parsley and six tablespoons of dried breadcrumbs. Fry until golden brown and crunchy.
- **For the Orecchetti**: Sauté the other garlic clove in butter and olive oil, stir in the tomatoes and cook till softened and breaking up. Add the glass of white wine and bring to a boil. Stir in the shrimps and simmer 1-2 minutes until they are just cooked through. Add the prepared Salsola soda, stir, taste and season if necessary with salt and pepper. In the meantime, boil the orecchetti in lightly salted water till al dente, save a mug of the boiling water, and drain. Return the pasta to the empty pot, stir in the sauce, loosening with some of the saved boiling water if necessary. Top with fried breadcrumbs as prepared above.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

A plant typical of Maltese wetlands (the few that are left) is Salsola soda (haxixa ta' l-irmied, Smooth-leaved Saltwort, Barba di frate, Agretti or Barilla plant). The smooth green leaves of this annual plant are fleshy and the stalk has a reddish colour. It should be harvested in spring, from mid-March to May.

Always ensure that the wild plants picked for culinary use grow within clean areas and are not rare or endangered. For instance, although there is much one can do with *Salicornia ramosissima*, it should not be picked or used in Malta, as the species is considered to be rare.

Orecchetti is a variety of pasta, resembling a small ear (orecchia, means "ear" in Italic).

Salsola soda also tastes delicious in an omelette or in raw salad.

The photo that accompanies the recipe is an approximation of the dish, as not all ingredients were in season during the time of the publication.

Main Courses

Cooking with wetland ingredients

40	Valencian paella	SPAIN
42	Black rice	SPAIN
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48	Eels in tomato sauce	ALBANIA
50	Fried eels	CYPRUS
52	Sea bream baked in salt crust	ALBANIA
54	Freshwater bream in tomato sauce	GREECE
56	Oven baked whole carp	GREECE
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SPAIN

Albufera de Valencia [Ramsar Site]

SERVES 10

1 kg rice, preferably bomba rice

1 kg chicken (with bone) cut in small pieces

1 kg rabbit (with bone) cut in small pieces

500 gr duck (with bone) cut in small pieces (optional)

30 pre-boiled snails (optional)

500 gr green flat beans (in bite-sized pieces)

500 gr pre-boiled lima beans (fresh or frozen)

500 ml extra-virgin olive oil

2 ripe peeled tomatoes, grated

2 teaspoons of sweet paprika

1-2 cloves of garlic, crushed

5 threads of saffron

Yellow food colouring

Salt

Sprig of fresh rosemary

3 lt chicken stock (approximately)

Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	252
Protein (gr)	15
Fat (gr)	13
Carbohydrates (gr)	14.5
of which sugars	-
Fibre	-

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Agricultural products

Author: María José Viñals

Valencian paella

- Heat up the frying pan. Add just enough oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Check that the pan is properly levelled, especially if cooking over a wood fire, and when the oil is hot add the pieces of meat (chicken, rabbit and optionally duck) and season with salt. Stir-fry over low heat until the meat is well sealed and turned golden.
- Add the green and lima beans, maintaining the same heat. Keep stirring carefully, to prevent the vegetables from sticking to the pan bottom. If you are using snails, add them at this point. Then, add the grated tomatoes, crushed garlic and sweet paprika. Keep stirring and once everything is well cooked, add the chicken stock (to reach a level of one centimetre below the edge of the pan) and the saffron. Let boil over low heat for approximately 30 minutes, until the stock reduces at least one centimetre below the previous level. If it's further reduced, add some more water/stock, season with salt if necessary, and add a sprig of rosemary.
- Then, add the rice, spreading it along the pan's length. Stirring with a wooden spoon, distribute it carefully all over the pan and spread the meat and vegetables proportionally. After that point, avoid stirring the ingredients until the paella is finished. Cook the mixture over a fairly high heat for 5 minutes, then lower to medium heat. For the final 4 or 5 minutes lower further the fire to very low heat. The total cooking time needed for the rice is approx. 20 minutes (depending on hard or soft waters, type of rice, etc.). Taste the rice to check if it's thoroughly cooked and well-seasoned. If it's still too hard, add some more water/stock. Once the paella is done and all the liquid has been absorbed, let it stand for 5 more minutes before serving.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Bomba rice or Valencian rice, is a short-grain variety, mainly cultivated in the eastern parts of Spain. Alternatively, any other short-grain variety can be used but avoid long-grain rice.

A large metal (70-80 cm diameter approximately) flat and shallow wide frying pan is necessary for cooking a paella.

The olive oil does not scale up to the same proportion as other ingredients. Use as much as needed to coat the bottom of the pan for the sautéing.

It is always a good idea to have extra chicken stock in case the liquid evaporates more quickly than expected and some more needs to be added.

These flat and shallow wide metal frying pans allow the rice to cook in a thin layer instead of a thick one, distinguishing the paella recipe from other rice recipes.

The proper way of cooking Valencian Paella is over a wood fire, using preferably orange tree wood. The recipe yields 10 portions. Traditionally, paellas are cooked in very large pans, as the layer of rice must be very thin to be cooked properly. That is why paellas are cooked over a wood fire or over a large gas stove.

SPAIN

Ebro River Delta, Tarragona, Catalonia [Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

500 gr small of medium common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinails*)

400 gr rice (preferable organic)

200 gr tomatoes without their skin, diced

200 gr onions, diced

2 peppers or artichokes, sliced

3 cloves of garlic

Virgin olive oil (2-3 spoonful for the rice and 100 ml for the Alioli sauce)

Dry red wine

	Per 100gr	Per serving (60ml)
Energy (Kcals)	188	470
Protein (gr)	7	17.5
Fat (gr)	7.5	19
Carbohydrates (gr)	22	55
of which sugars	-	-
Fibre	1	2.5

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Agricultural products

Author: Josep Maria Mallarach

Black rice

[Arròs negre]

- Over a moderate fire, heat a couple of spoonful of olive oil in a deep pan and sauté the diced onions and peppers (or artichokes).
- Remove the ink sacs from the cuttlefish. Add the cuttlefish (whole if they are small or sliced if they are larger) to the sautéed vegetables until they become golden.
- Add the diced tomatoes and 250ml of hot water. Cook over a moderate fire for 30 minutes.
- Add the rice and 800ml of water and bring to a boil, stirring with a wooden spoon. In a cup, use some of the boiling liquid to dissolve the ink from the sac and then add the mixture in the pan.
- Stir in 2-3 teaspoons of wine and salt to taste. Reduce heat to low and slow cook the rice for approximately 15 minutes until it absorbs all water. Top the dish with 4-5 large spoonful of Alioli sauce and serve.
- **Alioli sauce**: Pound 3 cloves of garlic in a pestle, add some salt and continue pounding until it turns into a paste. Then stir in very slowly 100 ml of olive oil until it becomes homogenous.

Main Courses

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

This recipe is typical of the Tarragon coast and the Ebro River Delta, using local rice and cuttlefish.

MONTENEGRO

Skadar Lake National Park

[Vranjina – Ramsar Site]

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Aldina Ličina

SERVES 4

250 gr of cut and cleaned eels
Flour
3 medium onions, diced
3 large carrots, shredded
5 gr ground black pepper
1 tablespoon of black pepper grains
Bay leaf
500 ml of white wine
500 ml of water
1 cup of rice
Olive oil (according to taste)
6 dry plums (or according to taste)
Salt (to taste)
1 teaspoon of red sweet paprika
1 tablespoon of tomato purée

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	194
Protein (gr)	5.2
Fat (gr)	9
Carbohydrates (gr)	16
of which sugars	2.3
Fibre	1

Baked eel in rice with dried plums

- Choose large eels because of their fat content and delicious taste. Cut the eel into 3cm pieces. Mix the flour and the salt. Roll the eel pieces in the mix.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Fry eels on both sides until half ready. Remove the eels from the pan and cover them with foil.
- Pour olive oil in another pan. Sauté the onions and carrots until soft, and season with salt, black pepper, red sweet paprika, black pepper grains and the bay leaf. Do not let them dry. Add the wine, let it simmer for 2 minutes and then add some water and the tomato puree.
- Cover with a layer of rice a cold clay pot, add the eel and the vegetable dry plum mixture. Keep adding layers in the same order until the pot is filled.
- Leave it to cook in a preheated oven (180°) for 90 to 120 minutes, depending on the type of rice. Check the clay pot occasionally to add water if necessary so that the rice will not dry.
- Serve warm, garnished with lemon rings, parsley leaves and olives.

TUNISIA

Kerkenna Islands [Ramsar Site]

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Nejib Benessaiah
Facilitator: Sarra Touzi

SERVES 8

2 kg octopus (fresh or frozen)
2 medium white onions
4 tomatoes
4 green peppers
6 cloves of garlic
200 gr tomato pure
1 tablespoon of curry powder
1 teaspoon of salt
1 tablespoon of chili powder
Couscous spices
500 gr carrots
1 kg potatoes
500 gr green beans
200 gr pumpkins, in slices
25 ml olive oil
1 kg couscous
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	113
Protein (gr)	7.5
Fat (gr)	9
Carbohydrates (gr)	18
of which sugars	0.7
Fibre	2

Couscous with octopus

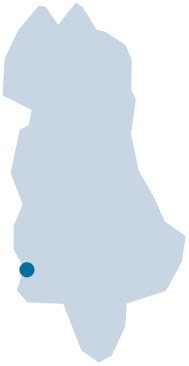
- Put the octopus in the freezer for 12 hours. Defrost the octopus, clean it, cut it in pieces, and boil for 10 minutes.
- Add the octopus to a separate casserole with olive oil, onions, tomatoes, green papers, crushed garlic gloves, fresh tomato, salt, chilli powder and the couscous spices (i.e. Ras Hanout, Coriander, Carvi, etc.) and leave it to cook over medium fire for 30 minutes.
- Then, add the carrots, potatoes, green beans and the sliced pumpkins.
- Wash the couscous and put it in a steaming basket on top of the pot to cook for 35 minutes.
- Mix the sauce with the couscous, add carefully the octopus and the vegetables and serve.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Couscous spices that could be used are Ras Hanout (equal parts of paprika, coriander, ginger and a pinch of saffron), coriander and carvi (caraway / fennel seeds).

ALBANIA

Narta Lagoon



SERVES 4

1 kg large eels
1 kg onions, diced
2 cups tomato juice
2-3 laurel leaves
1 spoonful of sweet paprika
Pepper
Salt
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	145
Protein (gr)	10
Fat (gr)	2.6
Carbohydrates (gr)	1.5
of which sugars	1
Fibre	0.3

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Ina Nasto

Eels in tomato sauce

- Scale, wash and drain eels well, cut them in slices and season them with salt and pepper.
- Heat the olive oil in a non-stick frying pan. Sauté the chopped onions lightly.
- Use another pan to lightly fry the eels with some olive oil.
- In a baking pan, sprinkle some olive oil and place the eels.
- Top them with the onions, the tomato juice, the laurel leaves, the paprika and some pepper.
- Place the pan in a preheated over (200°C) for about 40 minutes until the sauce becomes thick.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Although eels appear to be scaleless, scales are deeply embedded in some parts of their skin, so clean the scales carefully. To do it in the traditional way, scrub them in the sand, if possible.

This is a perfect dish for Christmas Eve (a partially fasting period). It is also a typical dish of the wider region of Southern Albania.

CYPRUS

Chryssochous River Estuary

SERVES 4

1 kg eels
Olive oil for frying
1-2 cloves of garlic
Freshly squeezed juice from 1-2 lemons
Salad and bread or pulses (to serve)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	236
Protein (gr)	24
Fat (gr)	15
Carbohydrates (gr)	-
of which sugars	-
Fibre	-

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Phaedra Andreou
Facilitator: Theotokis Theodoulou

Fried eels

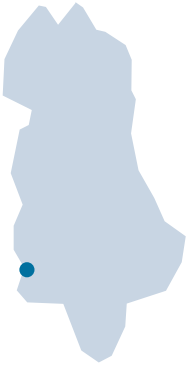
- Gut, clean and rinse eels well.
- Cut in 10cm pieces.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Roast the garlic for 30 seconds for extra flavour and add the eels. Once cooked from the one side, turn them over.
- When they are nearly done, add the lemon juice, lower the heat and cover the pan. After a couple of minutes, remove from heat.
- Serve with salad and bread or with pulses.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Eels, or "asselia" in Cypriot Greek, were fished from rivers, usually near their muddy estuaries or shallow water areas, as well as from swamps that existed before the lowering of the aquifer due to pumping and the creation of dams. The 80 year-old cook Phaedra Andreou, (a refugee from the north-western part of Cyprus to Polis of Chryssochous in the west where she lives since 1974) describes that Cypriots always cooked them in a simple way. Eels were fished in many parts of Cyprus. Her father and husband fished eels until the Evretou dam stopped the flow of Chryssochous River some 30 years ago. They are now found in the remaining streams and seasonal wetlands in limited numbers.

ALBANIA

Narta lagoon



SERVES 2

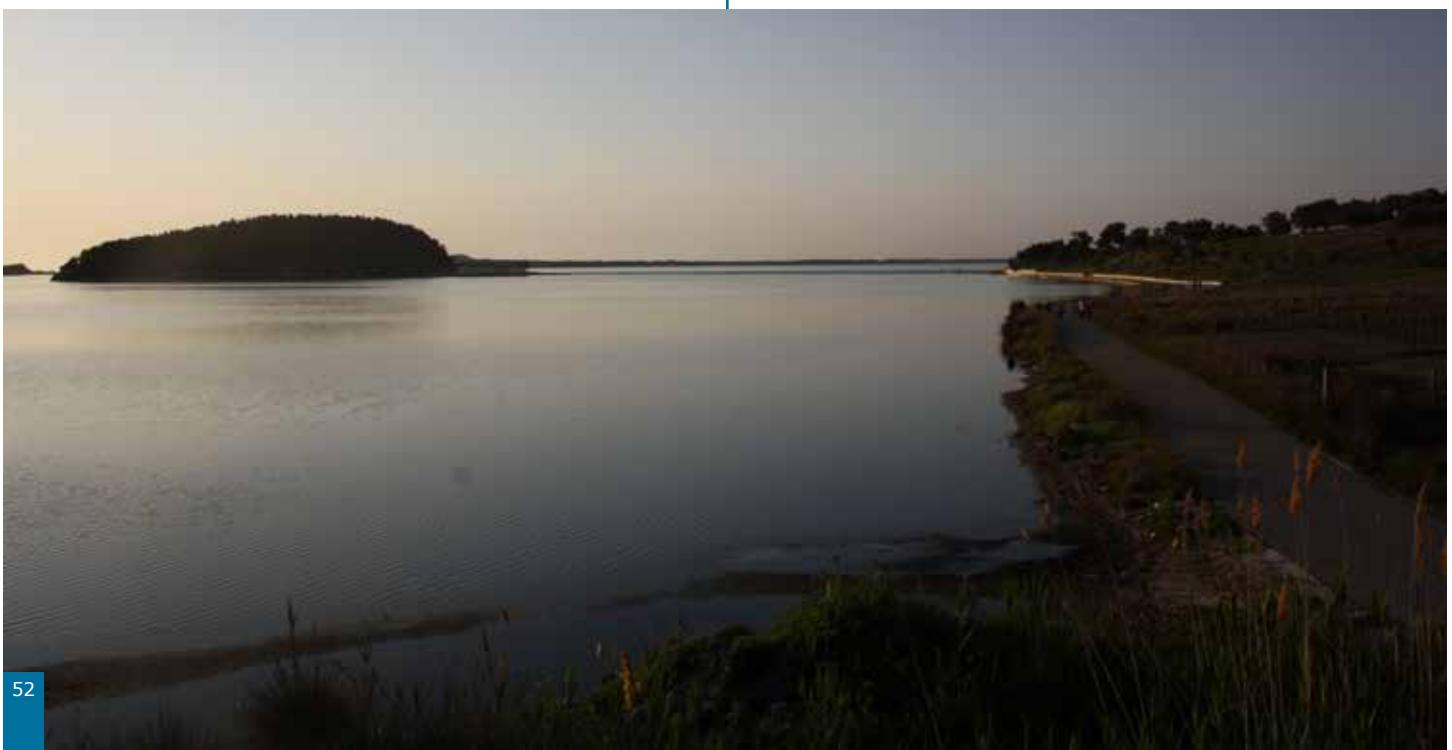
2 medium-sized fresh sea breams (800-900 gr)
2 kg of thick salt
1 lemon
1 clove of garlic
Parsley
Rosemary
Bay leaves
Dill
Thyme
Marjoram
Juniper berries
Salt
Pepper

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	194
Protein (gr)	20
Fat (gr)	27
Carbohydrates (gr)	0.3
of which sugars	-
Fibre	0.1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Salt

Author: Ina Nasto



Sea bream baked in salt crust

- Clean/gut the seam breams and wash them well.
- Chop the parsley, rosemary, bay leaves, dill, thyme and marjoram in small pieces making an herbs mixture. Use some of the mixture to stuff the fish. Add some salt, pepper and a couple of thin slices of lemon.
- Dress a disposable aluminium tray with a 1 cm tall layer of thick salt. Mix the salt well with water until it has the consistency of wet sand. If the mixture seems too wet, add more salt; if it is too dry add some more water.
- Place the fish on top of the salt layer. Add some juniper berries and grated lemon in the remaining herbs mixture. Mix it well with the rest of the salt and cover the fish well.
- Place the tray in a preheated oven (200°C) for approximately 25 minutes (depending on how big the fish is). Once cooked, remove the tray from the oven, and crush the salt crust.
- Serve with olive oil, lemon wedges or with the marinades of your preference.

Main Courses

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Do not be alarmed by the amount of salt used in this recipe. It just forms a crust to keep the fish moist and it is low in calories. The same method can be applied to various types of foods, such as poultry, meat, etc. but with fish the outcome is superb. Try it for full flavour cooking and in a low-calorie diet.

Do not remove the scales from the fish skin because it can become too soft and absorb too much salt.

A disposable aluminium tray may be easier to clean than a regular baking tray. remaining streams in limited numbers.

GREECE

Messolonghi Lagoon
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

4-6 freshwater breams (ligdes)
1-2 cloves of garlic, minced
2-4 bay leaves
500 gr fresh tomatoes, grated
White vinegar
Olive oil, for frying
Salt
Pepper

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	180
Protein (gr)	14
Fat (gr)	13
Carbohydrates (gr)	1
of which sugars	-
Fibre	0.3

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Nikolaos Noulas

Freshwater bream in savoury tomato sauce

[Ligdes savoro]

- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Fry the ligdes in the pan until nearly cooked.
- Heat some more olive oil in another frying pan and sauté the minced garlic, the tomatoes and the bay leaves.
- Season with salt and pepper.
- Once it is brought to a boil, add the white vinegar.
- When the sauce is cooked, add the fish and continue to cook until the sauce becomes thick.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

In the past and before refrigerators were invented, there were a few different ways of preserving food. This acid savory tomato sauce was one way of conserving fish, especially during periods of limited fish stocks.

GREECE

Lake Karla, Region of Thessaly [Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

1 kg carp
½ sweet red pepper
½ green pepper
½ yellow pepper
1 medium-sized onion
1 clove of garlic, crushed lightly
3 medium-sized white potatoes
1 tomato, grated
Parsley
Salt
Pepper
½ glass of olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	127
Protein (gr)	9
Fat (gr)	7
Carbohydrates (gr)	6
of which sugars	1.2
Fibre	4

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Margarita Georgoudi
Facilitator: Filio Karapati

Oven baked whole carp

["Karliotiko" fish]

- Cut the peppers, the potatoes and the onion into rings.
- Sprinkle a large pinch of salt and pepper evenly over the fish, and then place it in the middle of a pan.
- Dash a pinch of salt over the potatoes and distribute them around the fish.
- Mix the peppers, the onion, the garlic and the parsley in a separate bowl and then place them over the potatoes.
- Add another pinch of salt and pepper evenly over the vegetable mix.
- Pour over the olive oil and the grated tomato and bake in a preheated (180°C) oven for approximately 90 minutes (depending on the oven) until the fish skin becomes crispy.

Main Courses

GREECE

Prespa Lakes
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 5-6

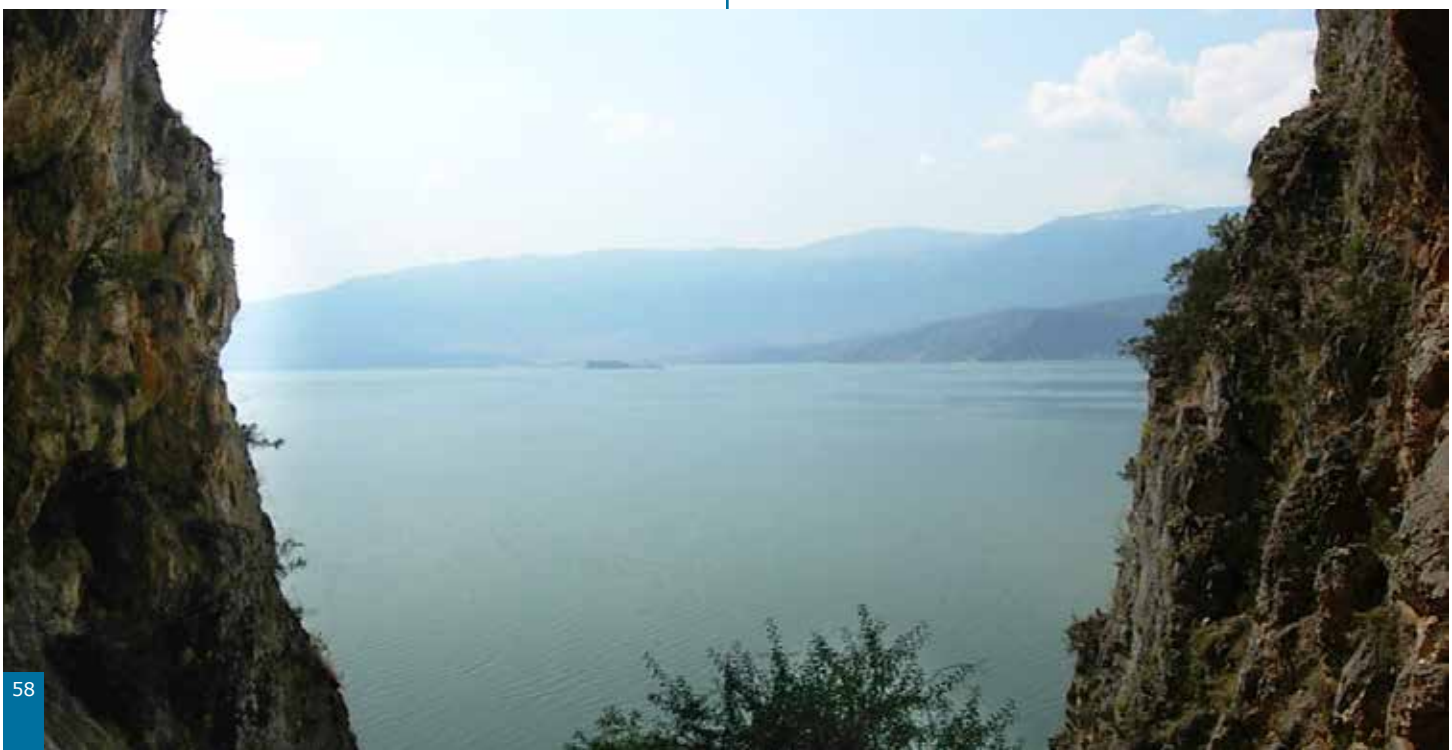
2-3 kg carp
2 kg onions, chopped
2 fresh tomatoes
1 green pepper
1 red pepper
2 bay leaves
4 cloves of garlic
Parsley
Salt
Black pepper
Olive oil

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	80
Protein (gr)	9
Fat (gr)	4
Carbohydrates (gr)	2
of which sugars	1.4
Fibre	0.4

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Thomae Papadopoulou
Facilitator: Ritsa Patsea



Oven carp stew

- Cut the carp in thick slices and season them with salt.
- Pour the olive oil in a frying pan.
- Add the onions and after a minute the rest of the ingredients.
- Sauté lightly for a few minutes, until soft. Put the mix in a baking pan.
- Place the slices of carp over the vegetable mix and sprinkle some more olive oil on top.
- Roast in a preheated oven (180°-200°C) for approximately 90 minutes.

SLOVENIA

Sečovlje Salinas
[Ramsar Site]

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Salt

Author: Tomaž Kavčič
Facilitator: Tatjana Cirer Kos

SERVES 6

1 kg coarse sea salt
250 gr aromatic herbs
1200 gr fish fillets

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	188
Protein (gr)	22
Fat (gr)	11
Carbohydrates (gr)	-
of which sugars	-
Fibre	-

Piran salt grill

- Heat a grill pan or frying pan over high heat.
- In a bowl mix the salt with ¾ of the aromatic herbs.
- Boil some water and prepare a herbal tea with the remainder of the herbs. Transfer to a spray bottle.
- Spread the salt across the bottom of the hot pan to form a layer two fingers deep and keep spraying with the aromatic herb mixture for about 15-20 minutes.
- Over time the layer of salt will form a solid block, so that the salt will preserve its mineral content.
- Place the fish on the grill and cook until tender. During cooking, continue to spray the salt and the fish with the aromatic herb spray, so that the aromas and flavours of the herbs and salt will mingle.

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

Keep the grill covered with a high lid. Before serving, allow the fish to rest for a few minutes on the salt grill without spraying.

TUNISIA

Lake Bizerte [Ramsar Site]

SERVES 4

4 fresh sea-bream fillets

2 large onions, diced

1 tablespoon of homemade harissa sauce (crushed hot peppers with garlic and spices) or store-bought

2 tablespoons of freshly ground cumin

100 ml of cooking oil

2 tablespoons of olive oil

1 handful of seedless raisins

2 tablespoons of vinegar

1 tablespoon of honey

2 tablespoons pastry flour

Salt to taste

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	208
Protein (gr)	14
Fat (gr)	15
Carbohydrates (gr)	6
of which sugars	4
Fibre	0.4

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Fish and molluscs

Author: Nejib Benessaiah
Facilitator: Hmayed Sakli and Lilia Zaouali

Bizerte sea bream

[Charmoula of Bizerte]

- Scale the fish carefully.
- Wash the sea bream fillets well and wipe them dry. Rub them with half of the harissa sauce, cumin and some salt. Let them sit in this mixture for two hours.
- Roll the fillets in the flour and fry them in hot vegetable oil until golden-brown. Remove them from the pan before thoroughly cooked, drain and let them rest.
- In another pan add the olive oil. Sauté the diced onions. As soon as they turn golden, add the rest of the harissa, a pinch of salt, the raisins and cover with water.
- Put the fish steaks back in the onion sauce and cook for five minutes. Remove from the heat, sprinkle with vinegar and honey and let them stand for a few minutes.
- This dish can be preserved for a whole week.

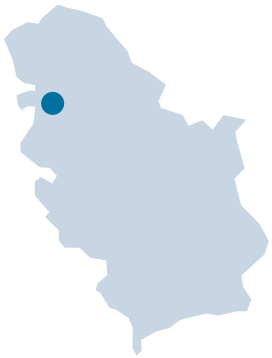
TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

By anthropologist Lilia Zaouali: "Chermoula" *is a sauce with raisins, onions, spices, vinegar and sugar. This is a typical fish dish prepared for the holiday that follows the end of Ramađan. This sweet-and-sour sauce –derived from the term "salmoriglio"– is also described by Apicius in his De Re Coquinaria. It is a very popular dish in all the cities (from Sfax, the Kerkennah Islands, to the island of Djerba and Lake Bizerte) that used to be Phoenician trading centres before the Carthaginians and later the Romans. Oddly, this sweet-and-sour sauce was reintroduced by the Arabs in Italy (Sicily) with the name "scapece", which comes from "Sikbabj" (a Moroccan stew with aubergines, dried dates, and dried apricots flavoured with cinnamon and allspice) and was very popular during the Abbasid Caliphate.*

SERBIA

Zasavica

Special Nature Reserves



MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Meat and dairy

Author: Djordje Belomarković
Facilitator: Svetlana Dingarac

SERVES 6

2 kg of donkey meat cut into 2 x 2 cm cubes

1 kg of carrots cut into cubes

2 large onions, diced

2 tablespoons of butter

½ teaspoons of salt
(amount varies according to taste)

Black pepper (to taste)

Dry bay leaves

Fresh parsley leaves

Note: This dish is not very common across the Mediterranean region. For this reason, the nutritional properties of beef –instead of donkey– were examined.

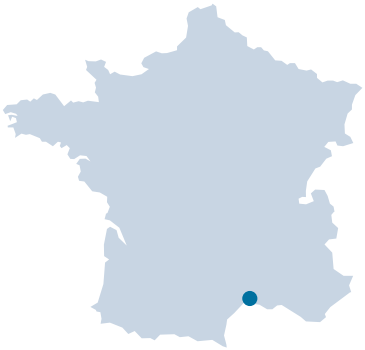
	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	163
Protein (gr)	13
Fat (gr)	12
Carbohydrates (gr)	2
of which sugars	0.5
Fibre	1

Donkey paprikash

- Melt 2 tablespoons of butter, preferably in a clay pot, over a low heat.
- Add onions and sauté over low heat until translucent.
- Add carrots and cook for another 15 minutes.
- Add donkey meat and spices.
- Continue cooking with the lid on, in a low heat stirring occasionally until the meat is tender (approx. 120 minutes).
- Check the clay pot occasionally to add water if necessary.

FRANCE

The Camargue [Ramsar Site]



SERVES 4

1 kg Camargue bull or beef
2 bay leaves
2 sprigs of thyme
1 celery stick
2 carrots
1 piece of dried orange peel
1 clove of garlic, minced (set aside for the next day)
300 gr onions
Salt
Pepper
Vinegar
1 bottle of full-bodied red wine (e.g. Corbières, Costières de Nîmes, Côtes du Rhône from the Gard)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	112
Protein (gr)	20
Fat (gr)	2
Carbohydrates (gr)	2
of which sugars	1
Fibre	1.5

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Meat and dairy

Author: Christian Perennou
Facilitator: Irini Lyratzaki

Bull stew

[Gardiane de taureau]

- **Preparation - The day before**: Cut the meat into cubes, chop the onions into large chunks and cover all with the red wine. Add the vinegar, thyme, bay leaves (cut in pieces for extra flavour), celery and carrots and the orange peel. Marinate in the refrigerator overnight.
- **The next day**: Take out the meat but keep the marinade (strained). In a pan, sear the meat with some olive oil. Put the seared meet in a casserole (preferably earthenware crockpot and not a metal one) and deglaze the pan with the marinade. When still hot, pour the marinade over the meat. Then add the onions from the marinade, thyme, bay leaf, celery, carrots, orange peel, salt and pepper, as well the clove of garlic. If the liquid does not cover the meat, add some more water. Let the gardiane de taureau simmer with the lid on for 2½ to 3 hours, checking regularly that the water does not evaporate completely. Alternatively, cook the meat in a pressure cooker for 1 hour. When the meat is cooked, the onions, carrots, celery and garlic should have softened into a purée. Otherwise, purée them separately in a blender. The sauce can be thickened by adding some flour or corn starch. Bring back to a boil to further thicken the sauce and serve hot with Camargue rice.

Main Courses

TIPS & INTERESTING FACTS

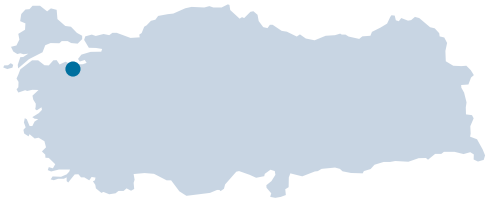
The neck, cheek and flank are the best meat options.

Choose the wine carefully, because bull is a firm, rich in taste meet, with a strong but not overwhelming flavour.

Traditionally, women in the Camargue put finely grate dried bread into the sauce to thicken it.

TURKEY

Uluabat (Apollont) Lake Gölyazi, Bursa [Ramsar Site]



SERVES 6

Dough
350 gr of flour for the dough
130 gr of flour for kneading
1 ½ cup of water
1 egg
1 egg yolk
½ tea spoon salt

Stuffing
1 Wild Duck
Pinch of salt
Pinch of black pepper
6 glasses of broth (consommé) for blanch
1 bunch of parsley

Sauce
400 gr of yogurt
3 tablespoons of butter
1 teaspoon of powdered red pepper

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	238
Protein (gr)	11
Fat (gr)	8
Carbohydrates (gr)	29
of which sugars	4
Fibre	1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Game

Author: Zehra Kurtarir
Facilitator: Erhan Kurtarir

Wild Duck meat pasty

[Turkish type ravioli]

- Season the duck with salt and pepper inside and out, add parsley inside the duck and sprinkle some outside. Boil for 15-20 minutes, until tender. When cooked, strain and keep the broth, remove the bones from the meat and shred it.
- Sift flour on a pastry board to create a heap, make a small hole in its middle and put in the egg, egg-yolk, salt and water, mix well and knead the dough. Cover it with a damp cloth and wait for about an hour.
- Sprinkle a cup of flour on the dough board, place the rested dough over the flour and spread the dough to a thickness of 3-4 mm.
- Cut the dough into 4 X 4 cm squares. Use a teaspoon to put the shredded meat in the middle of the dough squares. Then, turn over the four corners of the ravioli to cover the stuffing.
- Place them on a well-oiled baking tray, and bake them in a preheated oven, until the ravioli edges are slightly browned (180°C for 10 min.).
- Pour the strained broth over the baked ravioli while it is still hot. Serve the ravioli with yoghurt and red pepper in butter. Bon appétit.

Main Courses

TIPS AND INTERESTING FACTS

This recipe is also popular locally among Manyas Lake People (Ramsar site), Balıkesir.

Desserts

Cooking with wetland ingredients

72	**Pancakes**	GREECE
74	**Fig spoon sweet**	GREECE
76	**Quince spoon sweet**	GREECE
78	**Cranberries liqueur**	GREECE

GREECE

Alyki Wetland, Lemnos

SERVES 4

2 glasses of white "hard" flour
1 egg
1 tea spoon baking powder
1 pinch of salt from Alyki wetland or table salt
20 ml pure olive oil
50 gr feta cheese
10 fresh mint leaves, chopped
1 and ¾ glasses of water
Olive oil for frying

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	260
Protein (gr)	8
Fat (gr)	11
Carbohydrates (gr)	34
of which sugars	5
Fibre	1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Salt – Agricultural products

Author: Sofi Chapsi

Pancakes

[Lalagites]

- Put the white "hard" flour at the bottom of a mixing bowl and make a hole in the middle.
- Put the oil, salt and the baking powder in the hole. Mix well using a whisk, and add water slowly until you get a thick paste.
- Sprinkle over the feta cheese and the fresh mint leaves. Mix well to avoid lumps.
- Heat the olive oil in a pan. Wet a large table spoon in a glass of water. Scoop up about 1-2 tablespoons of dough per puff with the wet spoon, create a round shape and drop the dough balls into the hot oil in batches, wetting the spoon each time. Fry them in the hot oil until golden-brown.
- Then, set the lalagites aside to drain on paper towels. Place the lalagites on a platter and serve with honey and cinnamon.

Desserts

GREECE

Aliakmonas River, Kozani

SERVES 15

1 kg wild figs

2 lt of water for boiling

3 cups of water for the syrup

2 kg sugar

500 ml glucose syrup

½ teaspoon citric acid

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

A small piece (size of a chickpea) of copper sulphate (bluestone)

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	102
Protein (gr)	0.2
Fat (gr)	-
Carbohydrates (gr)	80
of which sugars	78
Fibre	1

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Filio Karapati
Facilitator: Stefanos Dodouras

Fig spoon sweet

- Boil the figs in a pot with plenty of steaming and churning water for 5 minutes.
- Drain them, rinse and boil the figs again for another 5 minutes in steaming water, adding this time in the pot the copper sulphate.
- Drain them, rinse and boil again for another 5 minutes.
- Drain them, rinse, let them cool and drain again. By this time they should have slightly softened.
- **Syrup**: In a pot with 3 cups of water, add the sugar. When the syrup starts to thicken, add the figs, the glucose, the citric acid and the vanilla. Skim off the foam if necessary and let it boil until the syrup thickens more. Remove from heat, let it cool and place it in jars.

GREECE

Prespa Lakes
[Ramsar Site]

SERVES 20

1 kg quince
1 kg sugar
3 glasses of water
1 lemon

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	461
Protein (gr)	12.3
Fat (gr)	0.6
Carbohydrates (gr)	108
of which sugars	100
Fibre	0

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens, herbs and medicinal plants

Author: Koula Prodromidou
Facilitator: Ritsa Patsea

Quince spoon sweet

- Peel the quinces, trim their centre and cut them in thin slices.
- Place a saucepan over a medium-high heat. Combine the sugar and water and stir the mixture constantly until the sugar begins to dissolve. Remove from heat.
- Put the quince in the syrup. Cover and bring to a boil over high heat.
- When a full boil is reached, lower heat to medium-high, remove the lid, and cook until the syrup reaches the desired consistency.
- Again, remove from heat and add the lemon juice.
- Spoon into jars with airtight seals.

GREECE

Prespa Lakes
[Ramsar Site]

1 kg cranberries
500 gr sugar
Tsipouro (pomace brandy)
2-3 carnation cloves or 2 cinnamon sticks

	Per 100gr
Energy (Kcals)	416
Protein (gr)	-
Fat (gr)	-
Carbohydrates (gr)	115
of which sugars	115
Fibre	6

MAIN WETLAND PRODUCT

Wild greens and medicinal herbs

Author: Thomae Papadopoulou and Vasiliki Nitsopoulou
Facilitator: Ritsa Patsea

Cranberries liqueur

- Put the cranberries, sugar and cinnamon sticks/carnation cloves into a clean glass bottle.
- Add tsipouro until the ingredients are covered. If the bottle is small, then fill it up with tsipouro.
- Place it on a sunny spot (e.g. window sill) and leave it for 30 days.
- Then, pour through a coarse strainer and discard berries. Let it clear and bottle.

TIPS AND INTERESTING FACTS

If the liqueur is not sweet enough, pour it in a pan, add some more sugar and let it simmer for 15 minutes.

If the liqueur is too strong, pour it in a pan, add some more water and let it simmer for 15 minutes.

Traditional fishing boats at Skadar Lake, Montenegro.

Conclusions

Mediterranean wetlands are physically, economically and culturally complex systems. They stand out as hotspots of biodiversity. Also, they provide immeasurable services to all living creatures. Yet, they remain amongst the most vulnerable and threatened ecosystems on this planet. With pressures ranging from habitat pollution, land use changes and water abstraction to urban development, tourism growth and climate change, in the longer term the first casualties will be the biodiversity they support and the livelihoods of humans who depend on it. Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs that humans have started to re-appreciate and take serious notice of wetlands at different levels, i.e. local, regional and international.

Although they are often relatively unexplored, Mediterranean wetlands are places with unique natural and cultural treasures. The co-existence between humans and Mediterranean wetlands dates back many millennia. Fertile lands and exceptional micro-climates –two of the most characteristic features of Mediterranean wetlands– supported almost all types of traditional practices such as agriculture, livestock breeding, salinas, fish farming, hunting, etc. However, major transformations imposed in the last decades of the 20th century resulted in the destruction and/or disappearance of many Mediterranean wetlands (Dodouras *et al*., 2013).

In this context, the development of innovative methods to preserve Mediterranean wetlands should, *inter alia*, promote the participation of key and involved stakeholders at all levels whereas human activities in such areas should balance the interrelated concepts of environmental protection, economic development and social welfare. In other words, local communities must be supported to improve their well-being, maintain their traditional socio-cultural values and promote them as part of the area's identity.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands –the only global treaty to focus on a single ecosystem– provides the international framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Since 1975, 169 countries –almost 90% of UN member states– have acceded and become Contracting Parties. Every three years, state representatives of the Contracting Parties meet to consider guidance on a range of ongoing and emerging wetland issues. Following the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties[1], the 13th Meeting

Wet meadows at Prespa Lakes, Greece.

of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP13, "Wetlands for a sustainable urban future") will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

In March 2015, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat, in cooperation with the MAVA Foundation, launched a 3-years programme entitled "Conservation of the natural and cultural heritage in wetlands". Its main objective was "to develop, in close collaboration with Contracting Parties, further projects on culture and wetlands in each Ramsar region that can act as an inspiration for other Contracting Parties, could be replicated in other regions and provide opportunities to enhance CEPA[2] outcomes". It was anticipated that the approved regional projects will act as an example of the rich cultural diversity linked to wetlands across the world and will contribute towards meeting Target 10 of the Ramsar Strategic Plan[3].

A great part of our modern society is once again becoming aware of the cultural importance of wetlands. The purpose of this publication is to promote the culinary heritage of Mediterranean wetlands (i.e. healthy wetlands, healthy eating) and, at the same time, further encourage the incorporation of cultural values in the management of wetlands, in accordance with Ramsar Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21. Also, this e-book intends to document the diachronic links of Mediterranean communities to wetlands, to demonstrate how these links can be strengthened and, thus, to create better conditions for the sustainable use of these invaluable ecosystems. The material presented in this publication was collected –on a voluntarily basis– mainly from local managers, scientists, members of NGOs, other experts and common people who are associated with Mediterranean wetlands in many different ways; the book would not have been possible without their invaluable contribution and imaginative culinary abilities.

Life exists because of water. The sites and recipes presented in this book are all good examples of humans-wetlands co-existence. They are stories of water and life. It is a small but essential tool in the effort to record old and create new "memories", to feel the aromatic wetland blends, and to taste the flavour of their products. Only then, the values of Mediterranean wetlands can be better recognised, interpreted and appreciated.

Fishing nets at Messolonghi Lagoon, Greece.

In short, this publication symbolises how humans can live in harmony with wetland ecosystems. In other words, it opts for common sense and a more responsible development. That is why real world examples are put on the table. The goal is to experience food not just as a meal, but as an adventure into the idea of responsible gastronomy. Share the taste preferences with others and remember that all these colours, aromas and mouth-watering "memories" do not have to be accompanied by a feeling of loss and regrets, but rather by a feeling of responsibility and appreciation of the roles wetlands play in improving and sustaining our quality of life.

1 COP12, "Wetlands for our future", was held in Punta del Este, Uruguay (1-9 June 2015)

2 The Ramsar Convention's Programme on communication, capacity building, education, participation and awareness (CEPA), was adopted through Resolution XII.9 at COP12 in 2015. It superseded earlier approved CEPA Resolutions in 1999, 2002 and 2008.

3 Target 10: The traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities relevant for the wise use of wetlands and their customary use of wetland resources are documented, respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention, with a full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities at all relevant levels.

Workers harvesting salt, Sečovlje Salinas, Slovenia.

Salt harvesting in Lake Alyki, Lemnos Island, Greece.

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Traditional wooden boat, Skadar Lake, Montenegro.

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Sunset in Koviljsko - Petrovaradinski rit, Serbia.

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Group of swans swimming in the Zasavica Special Nature Reserve, Serbia.