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HUFFPOST TASTE



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Creative Cooking: The Hot Flavors of Greece -- Opa! (PHOTOS)

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Outdoor cooking and entertaining is all about getting people together, and who does that better than the Greeks? Rustic Greek food is simple, fresh, tasty and made for sharing. You can transform any backyard into a Greek Isle by serving up this splendid Mediterranean cuisine.



Start the evening by offering specialty cocktails made with ouzo, the anise-flavored aperitif that is widely consumed in Greece and Cyprus. Serve a village-style Greek salad with cucumbers, tomatoes, red onions, green, red, and yellow peppers, kalamata olives and feta cheese. Next comes the star of the evening, deliciously gooey flaming Saganaki, served on sizzling plates with sliced bread. Grill up some tasty lamb chops and serve them with fresh mint sauce and ladolemono sauce, and some chicken souvlaki with a dollop of tzatziki on top. Traditional moussaka with roasted eggplant, lots of garlic, tomatoes and garbanzo beans provides a delicious side dish or a satisfying main course for vegetarians. Add a platter of lemon, rosemary, and oregano roasted potatoes and your dinner is complete. Crispy pistachio and honey-filled baklava and some fun cupcakes decorated with Greek motifs provide a perfect finish to your meal.

Recipes by: Neil Noseworthy at TasteWorthy Cuisine

Photo Credit: [Mark Luciani](#)



Ladolemono Sauce

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice (approximately 2 big juicy lemon) or 3 small ones
- Sea salt (to taste)
- Black pepper (to taste)

Combine all ingredients and voila! Done real easy.

Grilled Lamb Chops

with mint sauce and ladolemono sauce

- Rack of lamb cleaned and French cut by the butcher (if you don't know how or don't have time to do yourself)
- 1 sprig of fresh mint chopped
- 1 clove of garlic chopped
- 1 tablespoon grainy mustard
- 1 tsp fresh cracked black peppercorns
- 1 tsp olive oil

Mint Sauce

- Bunch of fresh mint leaves off the stem
- 1 cup olive oil
- A dash of Maldon sea salt
- 2 garlic cloves

Puree in a blender until liquid.

Assembly

Smear the outside of the lamb with grainy mustard, mint, garlic, peppercorns and oil. Let rest in the fridge for an hour. Then sear off on the BBQ, careful not to expose the bones directly to the heat as they will burn and become brittle and break. Once seared, place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. Remove from oven, cover with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes to sear in the juices. Cut into portions (usually half a rack per person) and serve with mint sauce and ladolemono sauce.

Chicken Souvlaki



Serves 8

Marinade

¼ cup red wine vinegar

2 tbsp brown torbanado sugar

1 tsp chopped fresh garlic

1 large lemon juiced, or 2 small lemons

1/8 of a cup or 2 tbsp dried Greek oregano if available or dried oregano

1 tsp black pepper

½ tsp sea salt

¾ cup olive oil add slowly while blending

Mix in a food processor or by a whisk until blended

Preparation

2lbs or 4 large 6 to 8 oz chicken breast or 2 lbs sirloin beef cut into 1" cubes

Place in bowl and add marinade to coat chicken but do not add too much so that it becomes soupy. It will drip and the BBQ and cause flair ups.

Marinate for 2 hours or over night. Then feed 4 to 6 pieces per bamboo skewer. Place on hot grill about 400 degrees and allow to cook for 5 minutes per side until browned.

Serve with lemon wedges and Tzatziki sauce.

Tip 1: pre soak the Bamboo skewers in water to prevent skewers from burning.

Tip 2: use a 6 or 7" skewers and place meat on skewer right to both ends to also prevent the skewers from burning.

For more design and creativity tips, see photo gallery:

Find Your Inspiration



The Aegean Sea was my inspiration, so turquoise and white displayed prominently.

Decor



Floral arrangements don't have to be professional as long as they're creative.

Food & Drink



No fuss appetizers dressed up in candy dishes.

Have Fun!



Entertaining at home shouldn't be stressful. Sit back and enjoy your guests.

Get Creative



Ouzo glasses garnished with a modern twist: a wedge of kiwi to cool down the heat.

Attire



Encourage guests to dress the part.

Design



Simplicity is in the details.

Appetizers



No fuss appetizers dressed up in candy dishes.

Guest List



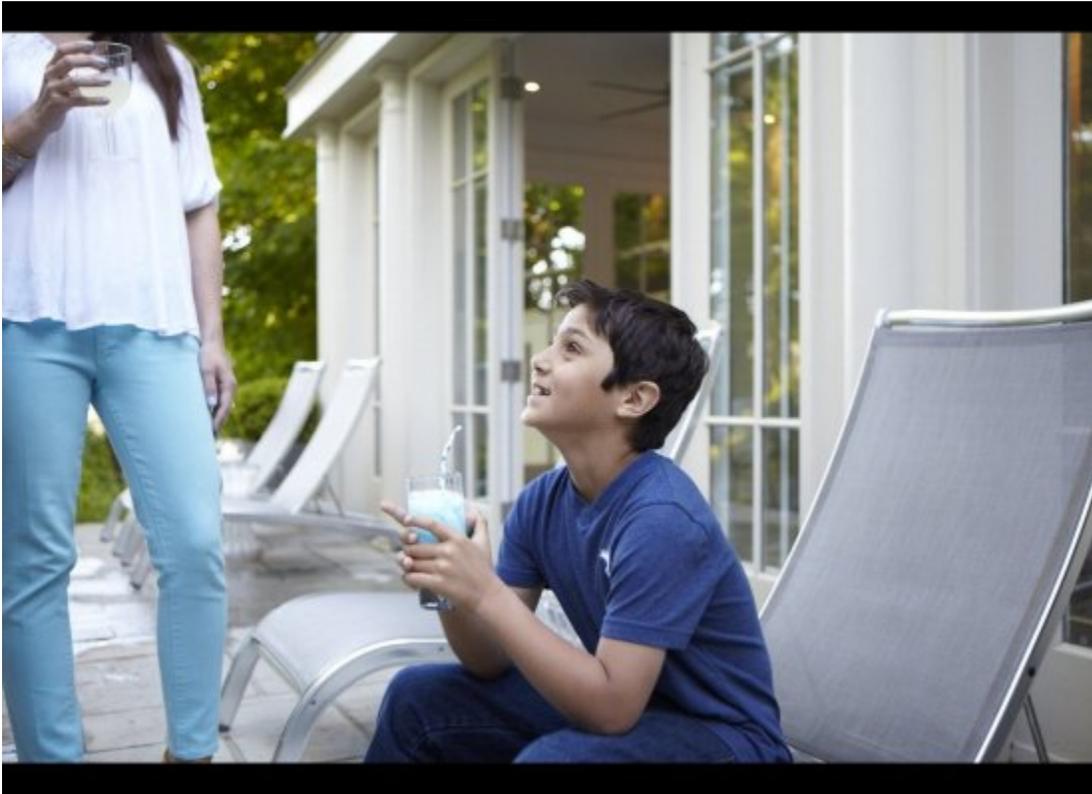
Invite a wide arrange of guests, young and old.

Cocktails



Fresh herbs and fruit will dress up any cocktail--and make it seem that much more exotic and refreshing.

Mocktails



Decorative straws for the kid's mocktails.

Cocktails



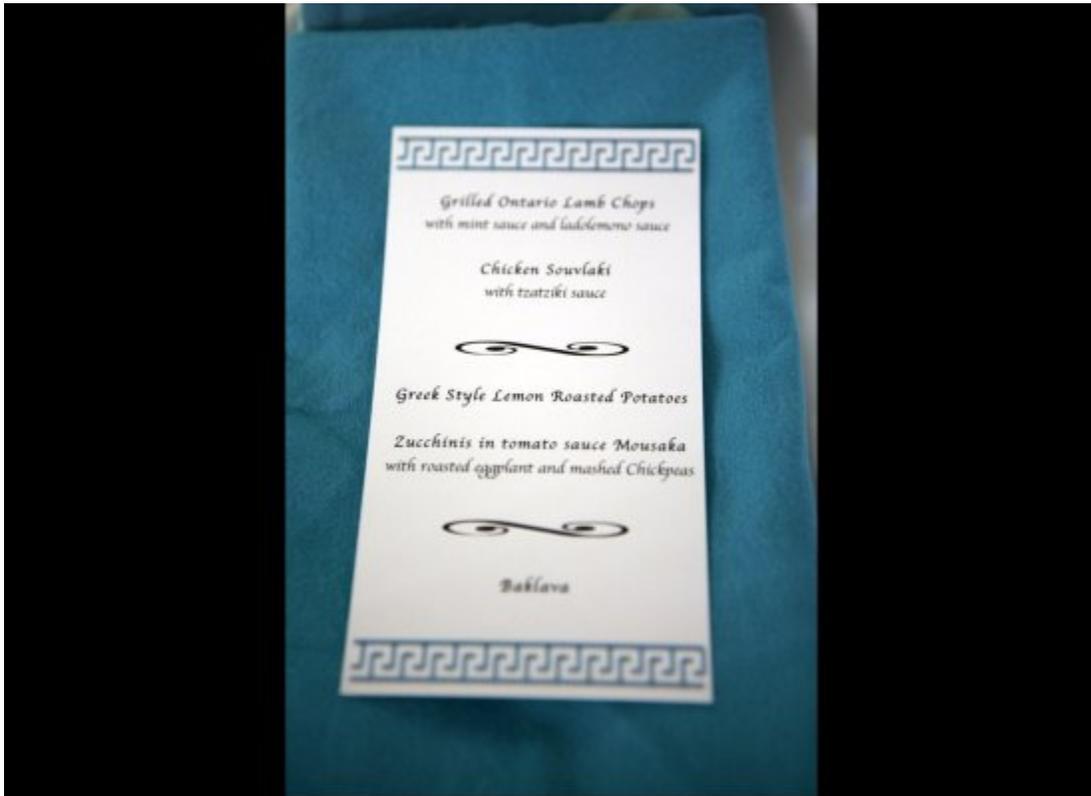
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Use Color



Add a punch of color at every opportunity.

The Menu

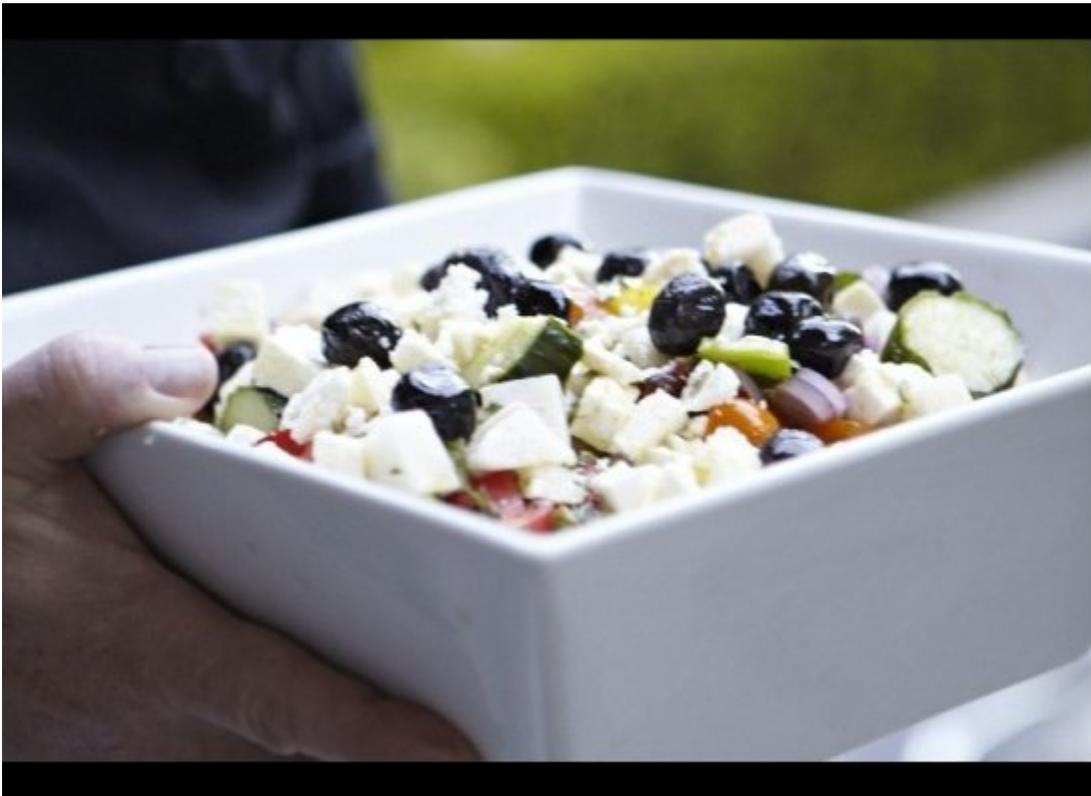


Print menu and name cards customized to reinforce the theme.



Submerge Calla Lilies in water and top it off with a floating candle.

Greek Village Salad

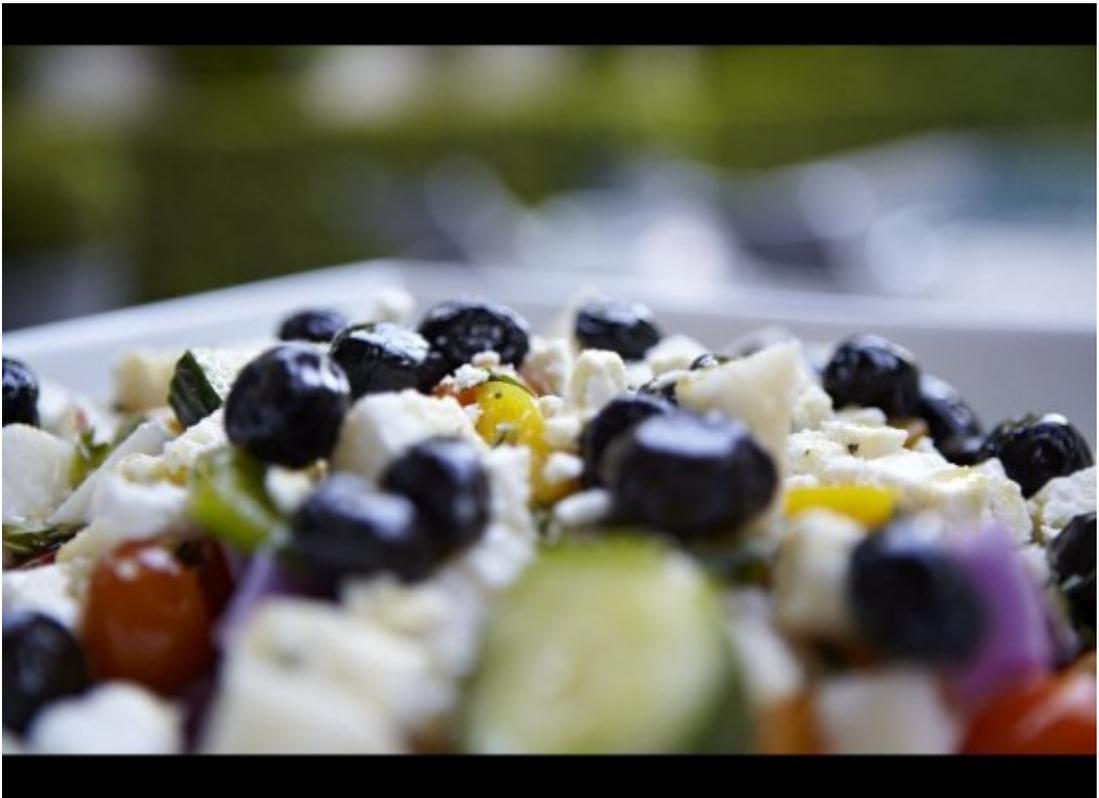


Serving the meal family style is more relaxed.



Souvlaki on the grill.

Family Style



Serve the meal family style for a more relaxed environment.

Decor



Turquoise and white carried onto the dinner table.

Opa!



Saganaki is a flaming cheese that oozes with salty flavor. The fire is quenched with a spritz of freshly squeezed lemon.

Decor



Candles, flowers and array of vases add an element of design.

Sweet Endings



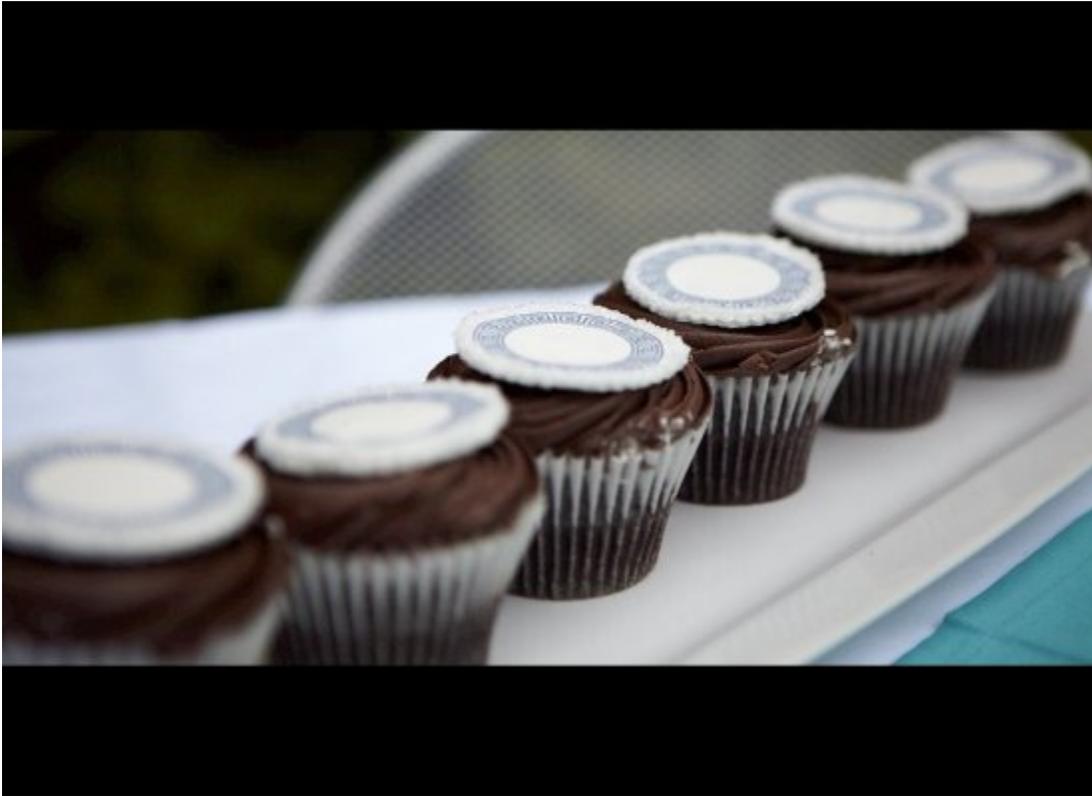
Jars of blue and white candy and a turquoise cake designed by [Petite & Sweet](#) carry the theme to a delicious finish.

Sweet Endings



Baklava oozing with pistachio and honey deliciousness.

Sweet Endings



The Greek key was carried throughout. Delicious, delectable edibles by [Eat My Words](#).

Make a Splash!



Try Greek night for your next barbeque. It will surely make a splash!