

# Holding the secret to longevity

Located in the southernmost part of Europe, the Greek island of Crete has been blessed with a temperate climate that provides the optimal conditions for cultivating high-quality produce. The Cretan diet, which dates back to the Minoan Age, is widely believed to promote longer and healthier lives

## Rusk

The Cretan rusk or *paximadi* is a good source of natural fibres that boost your digestive system. Moreover, this form of dried bread contains vitamin B and magnesium to help you maintain a healthy nervous system. Next time you visit a Cretan restaurant, ask for a fresh *dakos* salad, made from grated tomato, aromatic spices, traditional Cretan cheese and olive oil on a large barley rusk. A tip for the uninitiated: the rusk is a bit hard on the teeth and you need to slightly moisten it with a bit of water

## Olive oil

One healthy practice involves the everyday use of olive oil, which accounts for 40% of Cretans' daily calories. Olive oil contains antioxidants that protect the heart and the liver, and that can strengthen the organism's resistance against a number of diseases such as cancer

## Dittany or hop majoram

The plant's healing properties were first discovered when goats were seen rubbing their bodies against it to heal accidental wounds. Today, dittany is mainly used as a tea or a therapeutic sip for the stomach

## Olives

A great supplement to a healthy diet, olives contain a significant amount of calcium, iron, magnesium and phosphorus and are a great source of vitamin A. Crete is famous for the *throumba* olive from the town of Rethymnon

## Cheese

Rumour has it that Cretans consume the most cheese per capita in the world. *Anthotyros*, translated as 'flower cheese', is a traditional low-fat white cheese made of sheep's or goats' milk. When fresh, it is soft, sweet and mild and can be used in pies or eaten with honey. When aged, it becomes harder and drier. Salt is usually added to make it even more savoury

## Snails

Contrary to popular belief, snails are not just a French delicacy. Cretan families eat snails at least once a week. This low-calorie, high-protein food is rich in omega-3 acids and possesses anti-thrombotic and anti-inflammatory properties. Snails are enjoyed fried or *boubourista*, in the traditional Cretan style



Special thanks to *Mitato*, an e-shop of traditional and organic Cretan products ([www.mitato.gr](http://www.mitato.gr))