

## Chapter 16:

# A Study on Thriving Mediterranean Cuisine Attracting Tourism in Dubai

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Additional information is available at the end of the chapter

Mediterranean cuisine is well-known throughout the world and is widely regarded as the healthiest cuisine in every way. Although it is regarded as a cuisine that encompasses all the Mediterranean Sea nations, it differs from one to the next, with many variants based on the culture and cuisine of each country. Mediterranean cuisine, also known as "sun cuisine," has been proven to be the healthiest and most balanced, thanks to the richness of its flavours and the use of very healthy ingredients. Because of its widespread popularity, UNESCO designated it as Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013, acknowledging that it offers several health and lifestyle advantages. This cuisine has succeeded to incorporate many cultures into a single culinary style while retaining its distinct characteristics. They all have the same essence that distinguishes them from the rest of the world's kitchens, even though they use extremely diverse materials and methods. When we speak of Mediterranean food, we may refer to Italian, Spanish, Greek, Moroccan, French Provençal, or even North African cuisine, all of which are part of the same family yet distinct from one another. The chapter discusses about the Mediterranean Cuisine and how it is Attracting Tourism in Dubai

## 1 Introduction

A cuisine is a form of cooking that is characterized by its ingredients, techniques, and meals and is usually associated with a certain culture or geographic area. Traditions, practices, and resources used in food preparation differ by region, resulting in recipes that are unique to that area (Salas-Salvadó, & Papandreou2020). Ingredients that are available in local areas or through trade have a great influence on a cuisine; they could be transformed into distinct goods if they are popular within a region, such as Japanese rice and New Mexico Chile in New Mexican cuisine.

Regional cuisines may evolve because of product availability and use, local culinary traditions and practices, and cultural differences in general. These traits might be quite stable throughout broad swaths of terrain, or they can vary a lot within a single location. For example, corn (maize) is a staple food in Central and North South America, both fresh and dried, and is used in several ways. Rye, wheat, and animal fats are widespread in northern Europe, while olive oil is omnipresent, and rice is popular in southern Europe (*Aleppo's Kitchen*, 2018). The food of the north, which contains butter and rice, contrasts with the cuisine of the south, which includes wheat pasta and olive oil. In certain parts of China, rice is the mainstay, however, noodles and bread are preferred too. Lamb, olive oil, lemons, peppers, and garlic are common ingredients in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine.

## 2 About Mediterranean Cuisine

The ever popular and familiar Greek delicacies are moussaka, hummus, börek, tabbouleh, and baba ghanoush. There are several goods and cuisines that are distinctly Mediterranean ranging from breads to vegetables to oils.



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While many dishes can be classified as Mediterranean, true Mediterranean cuisine encompasses the Mediterranean basin, which includes countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, and Syria. Mediterranean food is defined by olive oil, wine, bread, and dried spices (Detopoulou *et al.*, 2020)

For a variety of reasons, including the allure of the Mediterranean diet and Syrian refugees seeking to share their culture with Americans, Mediterranean restaurants of diverse ethnicities are becoming increasingly popular in the United States.

### 3 Mediterranean Food

#### 3.1 Greek Cuisine

When the word "Mediterranean cuisine" is spoken, many people instantly think of Greek meals. However, foods and notions from Turkey, Persia, and Arabia have inspired most of the Greek cuisine. Tzatziki, for example, may appear to be authentically Greek, yet its origins are Turkish, even down to the name. Greek cuisine has been around for thousands of years and is intrinsically linked to Greek culture (**González, 2012**). Olive oil, vegetables, fresh seafood, wine, lamb, cattle, lemon juice, and cheese are just a few of the many ingredients used in modern Greek cooking.

- *Pita bread is a type of flatbread:* Pita has been a feature of Greek cuisine since the 1100s. Many Americans are used to eating pita bread in chunks with their meals, but this is not the case with Greek cuisine. In Greece, pita bread is partially utilized as a sandwich pocket for souvlaki, gyros, and other sandwich/condiment combinations.
- *Dolmades, or filled grape leaves, are a traditional Greek dish:* Dolmades are grapevine or cabbage leaves filled with rice and spices and cooked till fork soft. Although the term "dolmades" is unique to Greek cuisine, the notion of "dolma" may be found in a variety of Mediterranean cuisines, and the leaves could be either filled with tomato, onion, or minced meat.
- *Gyro:* A gyro is a meat sandwich roasted on a vertical rotisserie spit, and it is perhaps the most well-known Greek food in America. The origins of the gyro may be traced back to doner kebab, and it is currently a popular fast-food option in Greece. Gyros with pork or chicken are common in Greece.

#### 3.2 Turkish Cuisine

Although Turkish food is not as well-known in the United States as Greek food, the two cuisines have many commonalities. While kebab, yogurt-based sauces, and pie are unmistakably Turkish, they are also influenced by other cultures and cuisines (Aleppo's Kitchen, 2018).

- *Kebabs:* It deeply has significance in Turkish cuisine because it's not just meat on a stick, but also meats wrapped in bread, casseroles, and stews. Döner kebab, kagit kebab (baked in paper pouch with a variety of meats and vegetables), and shish kebab are examples of meat-based Turkish cuisine (skewered grilled meats and vegetables).
- *Menemen:* Menemen is an egg-based dish with fresh ground pepper, green peppers, and tomatoes. Fresh herbs might be added to the scrambled egg mixture before cooking. It is a Turkish breakfast dish eaten with dipping bread and a variety of side dishes. It's served in the same pan that it cooks in, allowing for more cooking after it's removed from the heat.
- *Desserts:* Turkey is home to a myriad of internationally eminent cuisine, including Turkish sweets such as Baklava, and halva, popular in both the US and Turkey. Baklava can be served in several ways and prepared with pistachios, almonds, or walnuts. Some variants utilize milk or fresh cream

instead of the syrup or honey that is normally used to make a lighter recipe. Turkish delight is commonly linked with a distinct rosewater flavour in the United States, although it may also be created with several flavours and variants, such as lemon or Bergamot orange. Due to its unique gel structure and starchy coating, it is a well-known dessert in Mediterranean cuisine.

### 3.3 Syrian Cuisine

Syrian cuisine has developed drastically through time, with many of the dishes still in use now dating back thousands of years. Syrian cuisine, more than any other Mediterranean cuisine, is predominantly vegetable and lentil-based, depending on eggplant, cabbage, cauliflower, chickpeas, pistachios, and a variety of other ingredients (Aleppo's Kitchen, 2018).

- *Shawarma*: Shawarma is a popular Syrian street food consisting of shaved meat (beef or chicken) wrapped in bread and served with hummus, onions, pickles, and occasionally French fries. In a sit-down restaurant, shawarma is served on a plate with hummus, salad, pita, garlic sauce, and rice.
- *Meze (appetizers)*: In Syrian culture, mezes are frequently served with bread before the main meal. Popular Syrian delicacies offered include hummus, baba ghanoush, kibbeh, and muhammara, to mention a few. Crushed chickpeas, tahini, and lemon juice are combined to make hummus, a creamy dip or spread. Tahini is the ingredient that gives hummus its characteristic flavour. Baba ghanoush, a mashed eggplant-based dip or spread, is another option. It's filling and filling, with a flavour that sets it apart from hummus and yogurt-based dips. Kibbeh is a Middle Eastern cuisine that consists of finely minced meat, bulgur (cracked wheat), onions, and spices. Lamb, goat, or camel may be used in Syria. Kibbeh is a popular dish that has been designated as the national food of numerous Mediterranean nations.

## 4 Countries of Mediterranean Cuisine

There are general flavour differences after dividing Mediterranean cuisine into three geographical regions: Eastern Mediterranean cuisine (Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, and Egypt) includes feta, yogurt, sumac, and pomegranates, Northern African Mediterranean cuisine (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) comprises of spices like as chilis, cumin, paprika, coriander, cinnamon, and cloves, and Southern European Mediterranean cuisine (Italy, Southern France, and Spain), capers, saffron, basil, mustard, anise, and pine nuts are more frequent (Cafesano, 2016).

## 5 Key Ingredients

The olive, wheat, and grape are the "trinity" of primary ingredients in traditional Mediterranean cuisine, giving oil, bread, and wine, respectively. This is referred to as the "Mediterranean triad".

## 6 Origin

Mediterranean food replaces butter with olive oil, and beer with wine. Over the years, the list of possible substances has evolved. During the Middle Ages, the Arabs introduced several cuisines to Portugal, Spain, and Sicily, which was a significant transformation. Aubergines, spinach, sugar cane, rice, apricots, and citrus fruits were among the items used, resulting in Al-Andalus' specific culinary legacy. The advent of foods from the Americas in Early Modern periods (16<sup>th</sup> century), particularly the potato's absorption into Northern European cuisine and the tomato into Mediterranean cuisine, was another considerable alteration. Similarly, Spanish, and Portuguese explorers brought back from the Americas several of the *Phaseolus* bean species currently used throughout the Mediterranean, notably *P. vulgaris* (the French or haricot bean).

## 7 Mediterranean Diet and Cuisine

The Mediterranean diet, which gained popularity in the 1970s, was influenced by the early 1960s food of Greece and Italy. The American Diabetes Association writes about "Mediterranean-Style Eating," referring to "the traditional Mediterranean lifestyle of eating healthfully together among family and friends," and asserting that "Mediterranean cuisine is plant-based," citing ingredients such as "whole grains, fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices, beans, nuts, seeds, and olive oil".

According to the 1984 Guida all'Italia gastronomica, "Around 1975, the Americans found the Mediterranean diet because of one of those new nutritional directions that too frequently affect fine cookery. The term even delighted Italian government authorities, who made one change: they changed the word diet to Mediterranean cuisine, which has always appeared punishing and hence unpleasant."

Traditional Mediterranean methods of life and eating have evolved and indeed since dietary experts discovered in the 1950s that individuals living near the Mediterranean had lower rates of coronary heart disease than the rest living in the other regions of Europe. The diets of people are becoming more northern European, with more convenience foods and less of a preventive effect on cardiovascular disease.

### 7.1 Main Characteristics

- Plant-based foods are the most popular.
- In addition, meat products are ingested in moderation.
- Consuming local items to optimise flavour is just as essential as having a wide choice of products.
- The collected items should, in theory, be consumed.
- There are just a few sweet items available.
- Olive oil is a frequent component in many dishes.
- Instead of salt; herbs & spices, onions, and garlic are utilised (Rodriguez & Gardens, 2021).

### 7.2 Seasonal Availability

Food in the Mediterranean area is seasonal, and natural items play an important role in its cuisine. This cuisine is dominated by seafood due to its proximity to the sea. Fish and seafood are plentiful whether in Italy or at the top of Africa. Because the region is exceedingly dry and arid, the absence of better pastures makes it difficult to breed many cattle, hence beef is not commonly found on Mediterranean menus. Lamb has always been a favorite meat for special occasions. WOW stands for wheat, olive oil, and wine, which are three of the most important elements in Mediterranean cuisine (Bali, 2012).

The food in the Mediterranean area is referred to be 'family-style,' suggesting that it is relaxed and unpretentious in terms of presentation and garnishing. The two most significant characteristics that define the concepts of this cuisine are taste and freshness. Plant-based foods are prioritized above lamb and other meat-based items. Seafood is also considered vegetarian and is known as *Fruits de Mer* (fruits of the sea). The Mediterranean region's moderate environment produces olives, wheat, pepper, and garlic, and food from the Mediterranean region employs these components liberally.

Because of its diversity in terms of cultures and nations, describing the flavors of Mediterranean cuisines is challenging (Bali P, 2012). Warmth, homestyle cooking, earthy hues, fresh vegetables, salty meat and preserves, and the bold flavor of olives, tomatoes, peppers, artichokes, eggplants, onion, and garlic are all categorized in Mediterranean cuisine. Figs, nuts, scented oranges, dates, and other fruits and vegetables are frequently utilized in their sweets and main dishes. Wheat by-products include whole grains, pastas, and

wheat products such as semolina in Italy, couscous in Morocco, and bulgur in Lebanon and Greece. Moroccan couscous is also widely used in Italian cuisine. Cheese is another prominent food item throughout the Mediterranean, with different sorts and variants available in each nation.

### 7.3 Health Benefits

- *Healthy fats for your body:* These are due to the presence of beneficial fats such as monosaturated fats. They are present in olive oil, almonds, and avocado and have a cholesterol-lowering impact.
- A healthy level of omega-3 may also be found in Mediterranean food. This sort of good fat helps regulate blood pressure by lowering triglycerides.
- Salmon, chia seeds, canola oil, soy and soy by-products including tofu and soy milk, are all high in it.
- *Healthy digestive system:* One can receive soluble and insoluble fibre in foods like chickpeas and lentils, spinach, strawberries, tomatoes, and other Mediterranean foods by eating a lot of fruits, vegetables, and grains.
- Fiber helps digestion by regulating your intestinal flora, keeping you nourished for longer, and decreasing the absorption of grains, bad cholesterol, and carbs.
- *Great source of antioxidants:* Antioxidants are abundant in fruits and vegetables, which are an important aspect of a Mediterranean diet.
- Oranges, red fruit, red wine, flax, and sunflower seeds, as well as legumes like chickpeas and lentils, will be antioxidant companions in this cuisine.
- The immune system is strengthened, and the indications of ageing are reduced, which are two of the most important benefits of a Mediterranean-style antioxidant-rich diet.
- *Protecting against type-2 diabetes:* Low carbohydrate consumption in this diet has been demonstrated in studies to lower the risk of type 2 diabetes by 30%.
- Fruits, vegetables, fish, and nuts have a low to moderate glucose index.
- These foods help to maintain blood sugar levels and prevent hyperglycaemia, which lowers the risk of diabetes.
- *A healthy brain:* Because of the minerals and vitamins, people who consume a Mediterranean diet had a 33% decreased chance of acquiring Alzheimer's disease, according to studies. (Rodriguez & Gardens, 2021).

## 8 The Mediterranean Diet: An Environmentally Driven Food Culture

Today, the phrase "Mediterranean diet" refers to the typical eating habits of nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea, primarily Greece and Southern Italy. However, it should be understood as more than a population's daily food preferences because the original Greek meaning of the word '*diaita*' does not refer to only food or eating preferences, but to a certain "way of living," which corresponds better to the modern concept of "lifestyle" (Lăcătușu, *et al.*, 2019). Although the prominent roots of this cuisine are unknown, it most likely developed alongside cultures living in the Mediterranean Basin from the beginning of civilization. Throughout history, the Mediterranean cuisine has incorporated some of the habits brought by conquerors while preserving many of the prior indigenous customs. The Fertile Crescent—the Near Eastern geographical area between the eastern point of the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf, which encompasses Mesopotamia, Canaan, and, according to some, Northern Egypt—had Mediterranean cuisine roots. (Aboussaleh *et al.*, (2020).

Food has travelled across countries and civilizations throughout the Mediterranean Basin since prehistoric times. According to hieroglyphic texts, wine and olives were exported from Canaan to ancient Egypt. The olive branch was left to humanity as a sign of peace by the ancient Greeks, and the city-state of Athens showed an olive tree as its symbol. Greek food influenced the Near East after Alexander the Great conquered the region in the 4th century BC. As a plant-based diet, the Mediterranean diet was affected in phases as diverse vegetal species were introduced from all over the world and acclimatized in the Mediterranean Basin.

## 9 Conclusion

Middle Eastern culinary traditions have been influenced by the Mediterranean climate, historic faiths, and centuries-old trading routes that connect Europe, Africa, and Asia. Olives, honey, sesame seeds, mint, chickpeas, and parsley are common ingredients in this region's cuisine, which offers a wide range of flavours. The most popular dishes in this region are kebabs, baklava, dolma, yoghurt, doner kebab, and shawarma. Middle Eastern cuisine is currently the most popular ethnic cuisine, having grabbed the hearts of foodies all over the world. Middle Eastern cuisine is distinguished by its use of indigenous herbs and spices. Nutmeg, caraway, cumin, turmeric, parsley, and mint are used in the dishes. Saffron, the world's most expensive spice, is used in several dishes.

The countries concerned are Turkey, the island of Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and they have a varied and close cuisine. Many specialties are common to these countries such as dolmas which are stuffed vegetables, grilled meat, and poultry such as kebab or shawarma depending on the country. We find in all these countries the concept of mezzes which are an assortment of dishes to share and eat with flatbread. The most famous recipes are eggplant caviar, hummus made from chickpeas, yogurt tzatziki or bourek which are stuffed puff pastry. Using olive oil, chickpeas, beans, lentils, and vegetables, most of the dishes are vegetarian. Middle Eastern cuisine's most popular vegetable is eggplant. Meat is sometimes excluded from meals due to religious restrictions. Lamb, chicken, and beef are commonly used in meat recipes. Skewering and grilling are commonly used to prepare the food. Cheeses, beans, and yogurt are used to provide the protein needs of the population.

Flatbreads or pitas are the most common way to eat wheat. The area's staple beverage is strong Turkish coffee. Tea has long been a component of the local culture. People from all over the globe visit the Middle East today to see the old world's architecture, culture, and historical relics. Any discussion of the Middle East, however, would be incomplete without mentioning the region's cuisine.

## 10 Declarations

### 10.1 Competing Interests

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### 10.2 Publisher's Note

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