

White Eggplant Salad with Octopus

(Melatzasalata Aspro meh Htapodi)
Courtesy of the Selene Restaurant, Fira, Santorini

In the capital of Santorini, Fira, we had a lesson on preparing this traditional aubergine and octopus dish. Selene Restaurant teaches recipes like this at their cooking school, which strives to train guests and students in preparing local specialties and native Santorinian products. The volcanic eruption that sent whole sections of Santorini into the sea thousands of years ago created the perfect underwater habitat for sea life, and that sealife provides the perfect feeding ground for the octopus.

INGREDIENT OF INTEREST: Santorinians praise their white aubergine as the "apple of love", and indeed for centuries it was believed to be an aphrodisiac. It's believed that white aubergine first appeared four thousand years ago in what is today Laos and Cambodia.

4 TO 6 SERVINGS

- 1 small octopus (2 to 3 lb), cleaned
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 medium white aubergine
- 1 cup fresh tomatoes, cut in 1-inch cubes
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- Salt and pepper

- Boil the octopus until tender. Depending on size, this should take at least 10 to 15 minutes. Cut into small pieces, then marinate in 1/4 cup of the olive oil, the vinegar and the oregano for 12 hours. Preheat the oven to 180C (350F).
- Cut a groove in the eggplants lengthwise, plunging the knife down no farther than halfway into the pulp. Bake on a baking sheet until quite soft. Very carefully remove the pulp and take care not to tear the aubergine skin. Discard the seeds, reserve the skins and chop the pulp.
- Mix the pulp together with the octopus mixture, add some more olive oil on the top if necessary for desired consistency. Serve at room temperature.
- **EXPERIMENT LIKE A GREEK:** You can use the usual purple aubergine for this dish, but make a point to find some white ones at least once and prepare this recipe. You don't want to miss their delicious, sweet taste.

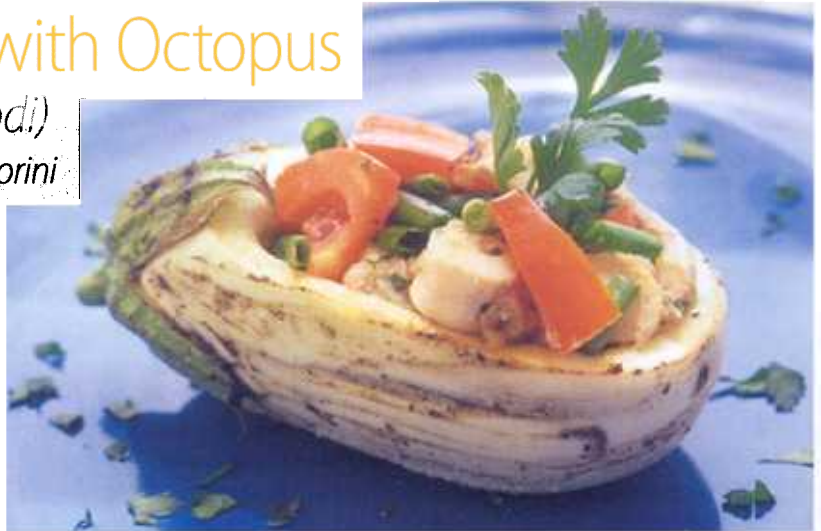


IMAGE COURTESY OF HOTEL SELENE



Above The recipe can be done with regular purple aubergine, but the authors recommend you try white aubergine – at least once
Left Octopus in Santorini drying in the sun

About the authors DEAN AND CATHERINE KARAYANIS



Dean Karayanis has been writing news, sketch comedy and opinion pieces for TV, radio and the Internet for more than ten years. Both of Dean's grandfathers migrated to America and used their skills as chefs to bring their families along behind them. Several uncles, cousins and countless symbetheri (relatives by marriage) have since followed in these well-worn footsteps. Dean's Yiayia Argyro still wraps *dolmades* (regional specialty grape leaves stuffed with rice) at 93, and to this day has her *ouzo* still in the basement just in case Prohibition comes back.

Catherine (Creary) Karayanis has authored four previous books covering networking, database administration, and operating systems for McGraw-Hill, as well as numerous online computing courses and articles. She has been a trainer in the corporate educational system, as well as a public and private school teacher. Catherine has also worked in the restaurant business for several years spending years in kitchens and managing hotel restaurants. Catherine has developed a love of Greek food, which Dean cleverly exploited during their courtship, and remarks before every bowl of *avgolemono* (egg and lemon) soup, "How did I live my entire life without this?" Yes, it's especially good to kick off the chill of those damp, Mediterranean mornings. Catherine's extensive restaurant experience includes working her way up from a hostess and waitress to managing hotel restaurants in eastern Canada. Her love of Dean and all things Greek has inspired her to branch out from authoring technical computer books to conquering the world of cooking books.

Book info

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