

COOKING AROUND THE WORLD | Greece



Maria Benardis of Greekalicious.
Photo: ALAN PLACE

Greek cuisine's rich history

IT may surprise educated diners that despite our large Greek population, our knowledge of Greek cuisine remains somewhat limited.

Thankfully, in recent years the gap in culinary culture has been filled by popular institutions such as Greekalicious cooking school.

Maria Benardis formed the concept while on the Greek island of Mykonos: she wanted to educate people in Greek cooking beyond the traditional souvlaki and moussaka.

After working in the kitchen at the Neil Perry restaurant, XO, Benardis decided that it was finally time to share this concept with others, bust some of the myths of the cooking style and set up shop in Paddington. Greekalicious, Sydney's first exclusive Greek cooking school, was born.

The business now offers an introduction to traditional and modern Greek cookery, the secret ingredients, the stories, the culture and the history behind each dish. Classes offered include traditional Greek trademark dishes, cooking on the Skara – the Greek barbecue, and traditional

Greek comfort food.

As Greekalicious has evolved, Benardis has even been able to launch culinary tours back to the homeland. This May, Greekalicious lovers will travel back with the founder for a first-hand exploration of the culture and local ingredients, visiting popular locations such as Athens, Santorini, Kalamata and Chios.

Each cooking class at Greekalicious costs \$130, or you can book three classes for \$360. Children's cooking classes are \$60 per child and corporate/private classes are also available. For more information visit www.greekalicious.com.au.



DID YOU KNOW?

In Greece, prickly pears are known as *frangosika* (French figs) or *pavlosika* (Paul's figs). In Cyprus they are also known as *papoutsosika* (shoe figs). The botanical name for prickly pears is *Opuntia polyacantha*. It's derived from the Greek words *polys* (meaning "many") and *acanthus* (for "thorn" or "spine"). *Opuntia* is derived from the town Opus in Locris, a region of Ancient Greece. Prickly pears were initially planted in Greece as a means of protecting crops with the thorns of the plant.