

Food and Medicine in the Time of the Epicureans in Ancient Greece and Rome

Post by “Kalosyni” of May 31, 2022 at 9:33 AM

This thread is for food (and food as medicine) in the time of Epicureans in ancient Greece and Rome.

Regarding honey in ancient times:

Quote

In Athens, beekeeping was so organized that the great legislator Solon (640-558 BC) was forced to define by law the distances that should exist between apiaries so as not to create misunderstandings about the ownership of flocks.

They did not have sugar, but they had honey, as part of their diet and medicine.

Quote

Some of the ways in which the ancient Greeks used honey in their daily lives were the following:

Acid honey. Honey with vinegar. How to deal with fever.

Apple honey. Apples preserved in honey throughout the year. The honey acquired the characteristic smell of apples. They parsed the same recipe with other fruits.

Mead honey. Liqueur resulting from alcoholic fermentation of honey.

Melikrato. Honey with milk. Food for children.

Wine honey. Honey with wine. It is reported that Democritus lived to a ripe old age because he consumed wine honey with bread.

Hippocrates excludes the beneficial effect of “wine honey” on healthy and sick, Pythagoras finds that honey eliminates fatigue, while Democritus writes about well-

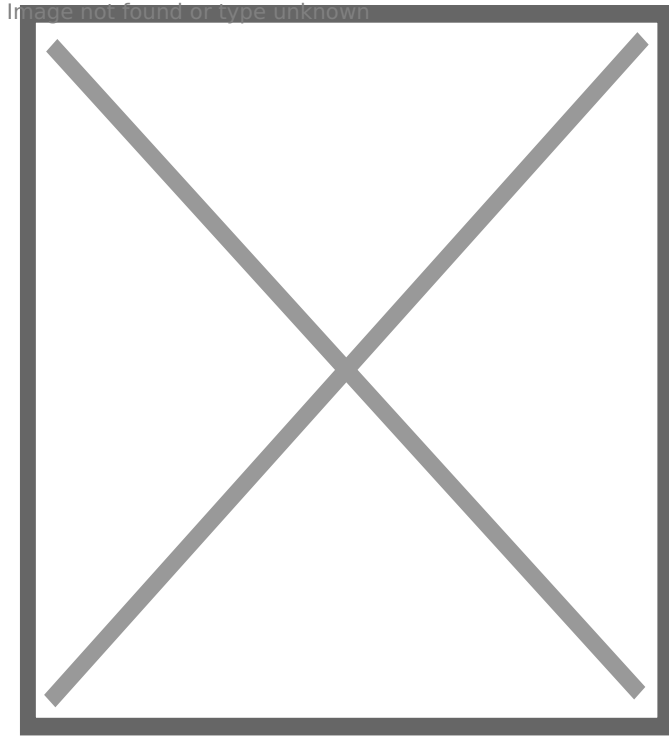
being and longevity because of honey.

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[Honey in the life of the ancient Greeks - Asterios Bio](#)

The art of beekeeping is not something new in Greece. On the contrary, it has been proven that honey played a leading role in the daily life of the ancient...

asteriosbio.com



[Honey in history: Ancient Greece](#)

Greece has always been a land with beautiful and various flora. Honey bees have always been at home here. Today their excellent honey is sold all over the...

healthywithhoney.com

Post by “Root304” of May 31, 2022 at 3:37 PM

Awesome! All this mention of honey takes me back to my homebrewing days where I made a lot of mead (as well as beer).

Post by “beasain” of June 9, 2022 at 8:51 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Quote from Root304](#)

a lot of mead

How did you basically prepared it?

Post by “beasain” of June 9, 2022 at 8:56 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Regarding honey in ancient times

Do you know about the use of propolis in antiquity as an antibiotic?

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 9, 2022 at 11:06 AM

[beasain](#), I just looked up about propolis, and found [an online article](#) which says that

Greek and Roman physicians used it as mouth disinfectant and as an antiseptic and healing product in wound treatment, prescribed for topical therapy of cutaneous and mucosal wounds.

Post by “beasain” of June 9, 2022 at 11:32 AM

[Kalosyni](#), thanks a lot for this article. Apart from the mentioned information, it is also a review of the different therapeutic benefits of this bee product.

Post by “Pacatus” of July 21, 2022 at 5:43 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Kalosyni](#)

They were wiser about bees than we are. I recently read an article about Canadian blueberry farmers, who are seeing diminished yields because of the lack of bees for pollination (even with travelling beekeepers). Where we live now (in town), when we take a walk, we see plenty of white clover and areas where wildflowers have been planted - but hardly any bees (likely due to pesticides).

When we lived at Terrapin Branch, I used to sit under a large, blooming Hawthorn tree - near our small blooming cherry orchard - and you could literally *feel* the hum of the thousands of bees. (We also seeded our yard space with clover.)

The lowly honey bee would be an appropriate symbol for the Epicurean Garden.

Post by “Joshua” of August 21, 2022 at 10:44 PM

I have also brewed mead, which was drinkable if only just. From memory, the process was simple and my equipment rather non-technical. It consisted primarily of taking a clean glass vessel of a fair size, adding together water, citrus and honey, mixing in the yeast--did I proof the yeast? I don't remember--and fixing a common party balloon over the mouth of the vessel. Prick the balloon with a needle--in its contracted state, the hole will close to prohibit outside yeast and bacteria.

But set all of this aside in a warmish spot, and soon the brew begins to bubble. The releasing gases will inflate the balloon enough to open the prick hole, releasing the gas. This also supplies positive pressure, so that the hole in the balloon only vents, and does not admit outside air. As the fermentation progresses, and the brew runs out of sugar, the balloon will go limp again. The mixture, now properly mead, is ready to be filtered and drunk. This process can take several weeks.

Post by “Joshua” of August 21, 2022 at 11:05 PM

When I toured the Jack Daniel's distillery, I was surprised to see that they opened the fermentation vats and allowed people to peek their heads in. But when the brew comes out fermented, distilled, and charcoal filtered, it's 40 percent alcohol and they spray it on your

hands as a sanitizer.

Somebody did an analysis of all of the species of wood used in surviving furniture from Pompeii and Herculaneum; acacia, alder, ash, beech, boxwood, walnut, wild olive, willow, making up stools, crates, tables, bedframes, and shrines to the household gods. There's a particularly poignant cradle on rockers.

Post by “Don” of August 22, 2022 at 6:29 AM

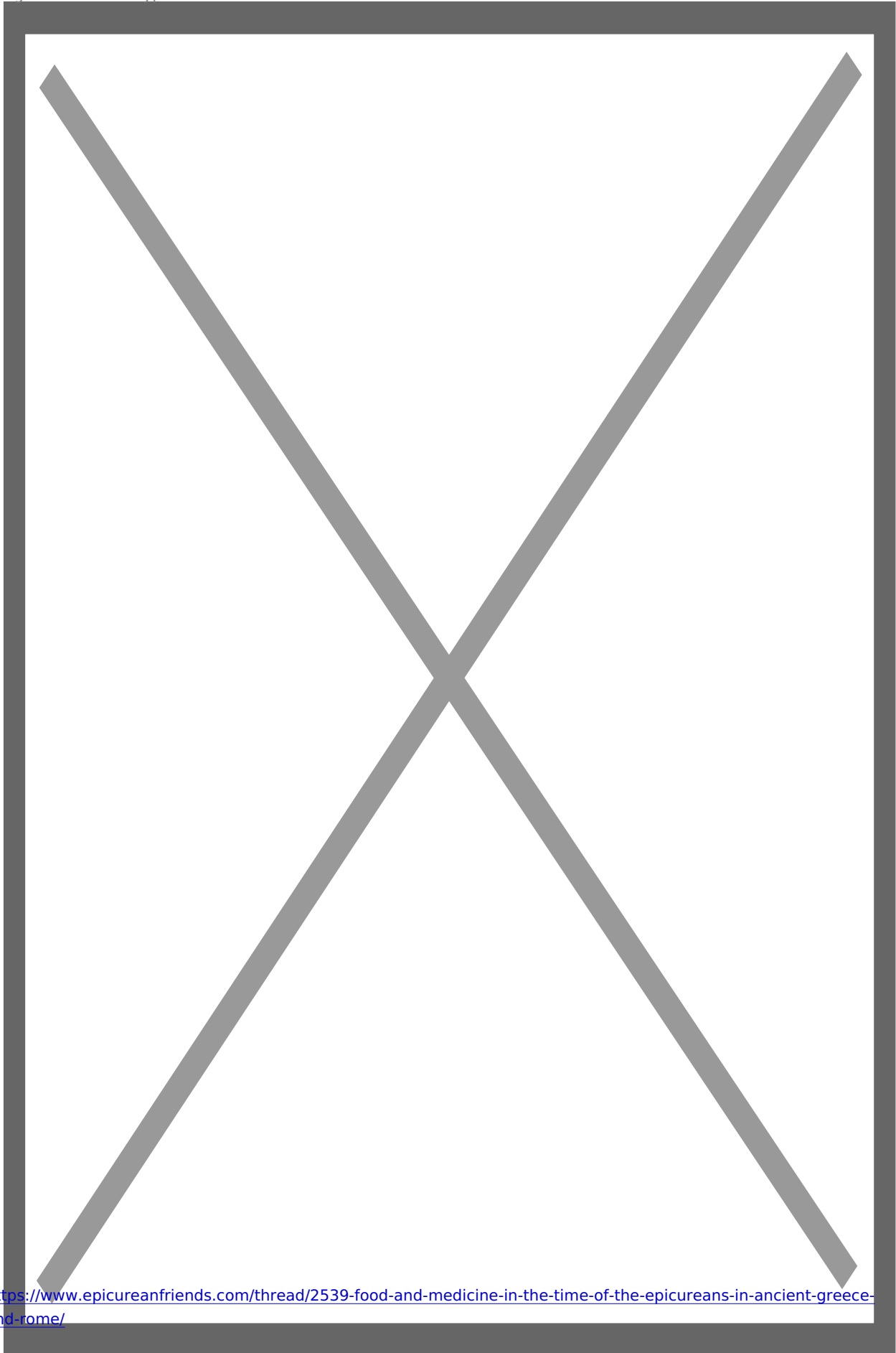
[Quote from Joshua](#)

mead

Mead is having a bit of a renaissance lately. I must say I enjoy a glass every once in awhile and we have some excellent meadery establishments in the area including:

[Order Online | Feisty Mead](#)

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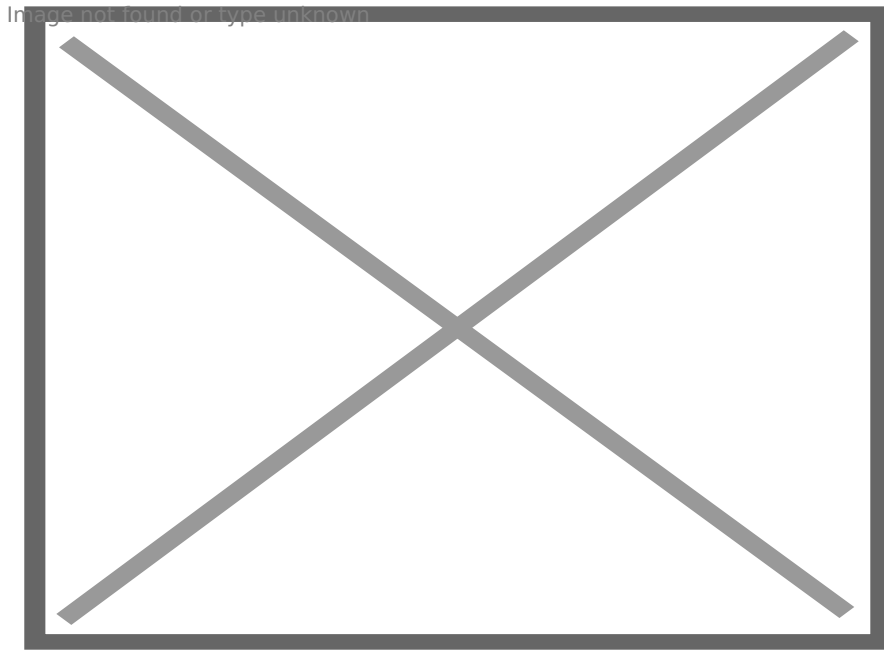


<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Meadery | Cleveland,OH | Western Reserve Meadery](#)

Western Reserve Meadery, a Cleveland, OH Meadery making a variety of mead styles (honey wines). Dry meads, sweet mead, sparkling mead, melomels and metheglins....

www.westernreservemeadery.com



[BottleHouse](#)

The BottleHouse Brewery is an GABF award winning, community centric brewery, meadery and cidery. Focusing on barrel aged sours, real cider and artisanal mead....

www.bottlehouse.co

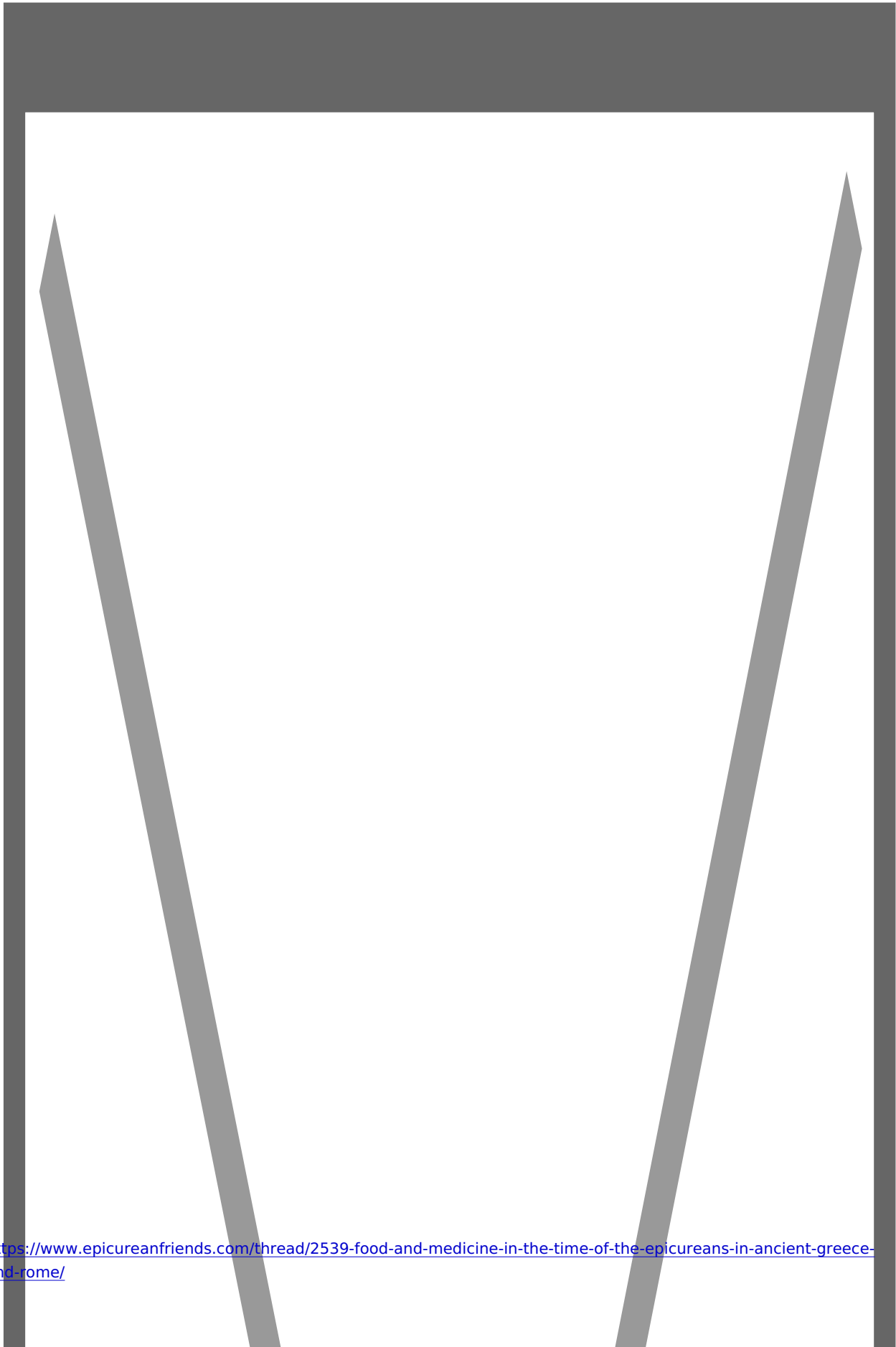
I'm sure nothing surpasses [Joshua](#) 's homemade, balloon-pinhole method, but they all do a good job! 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 11, 2022 at 11:17 AM

Here is an interesting link to diet in ancient Greece:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Ancient Recipe: Ptisane \[Barley Water\] \(Greek, at least 5th century BCE\)](#)

"[Barley] groats belong to the wheat family. They have juice that is quite nourishing and tenacious." ~ Aelius Galenus (Galen), De alimentorum facultatibus (On...
passtheflamingo.com

Post by "Don" of September 11, 2022 at 11:41 AM

Thanks, [Kalosyni](#) !

For completeness, I'm going to post the maza recipe that author links to in that article too:

[Ancient Recipe: Maza \(Ancient Greek, ca. 2nd millennium BCE\)](#)

"My maza comes to me from my spear, from my spear comes my Ismarian wine, and I drink while leaning on my spear." ~ the Greek warrior-poet Archilochus explains...
passtheflamingo.com

The significance is that that is the *exact* word Epicurus uses in the (in)famous "bread and water" statement in the letter to Menoikeus.

PS: I'm still trying to find barley flour to be able to try the maza recipe 😊

Post by "Cassius" of September 11, 2022 at 12:38 PM

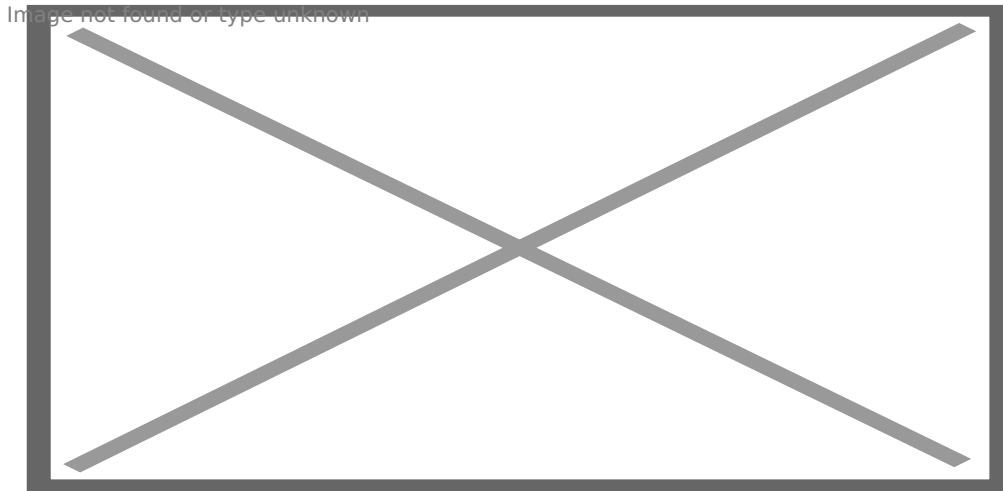
Comes from my spear...? Meaning what?

Post by "Don" of September 11, 2022 at 12:46 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Comes from my spear...? Meaning what?

It means he gains his bread and wine through his military exploits. He earns them by means of his military prowess.



[The Swiss Army Spear](#)

Archilochus Fr. 2 (West) Thanks to the spear I've got kneaded barley cake, And thanks to the spear Ismarian wine too. And so I recline and drink, thanks to the...
sententiaeantiquae.com

Post by "Joshua" of September 11, 2022 at 9:18 PM

Quote

It means he gains his bread and wine through his military exploits. He earns them by means of his military prowess.

Somewhat similar to the phrasing used in the film *Troy*;

Quote

Nestor: How many battles have we won off the edge of his sword? This will be the greatest war the world has ever seen. We need the greatest warrior.

Post by "Kalosyni" of September 12, 2022 at 11:09 PM

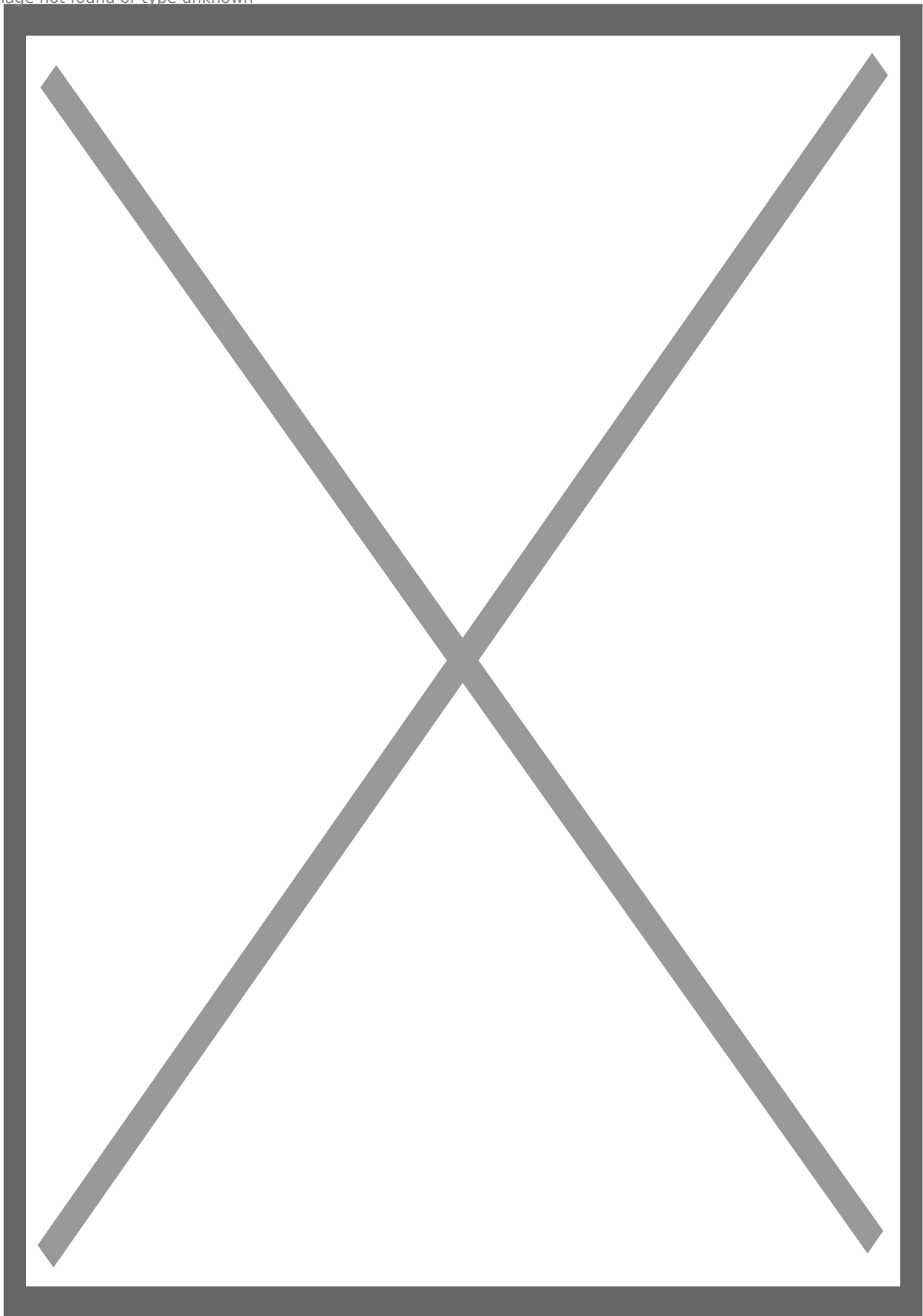
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

This has good info:

[Ancient Greek cuisine - Wikipedia](#)

Post by “Don” of September 12, 2022 at 11:23 PM

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Barley Pita Bread](#)

When many think of Greek Food, they think of pita bread. In truth, the Ancient Greeks enjoyed all sorts of breads, both flat and formed, but I thought it...

anthrochef.com

Okay, this one looks interesting. Not sure how "ancient" it is with yeast and wheat flour, but this is what I have in mind to try with the other recipes

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of September 16, 2022 at 3:00 PM

I've to admit, it all looks incredibly tasty... I think that I have a few good ideas for college. Thanks 😊

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 23, 2022 at 3:56 AM

Ancient Honey Cakes! And Birthday Cakes!

Excerpt from a website with a [recipe \(but this one has nuts\)](#):

Quote

One of the foods mentioned several times in my novel are honey cakes, which are offered up to the gods in thanks. I was intrigued by the idea of these cakes and how I could recreate them today. What were their origins? Why did the ancients offer up cakes to their deities?

If any of the ancient myths are to be believed, the gods of ancient Greek and Roman antiquity loved a bountiful meal. The stories left to us by Ovid, Herodotus, Virgil, Homer and others are ripe with stories of grand feasts enjoyed by the gods, or the gods meddling in mortal banquets such as the feast of King Midas in which all of the food tragically turned to gold. In fact, for centuries beyond ancient times, the wedding celebrations of Cupid and Psyche and Peleus and Thetis have been common artistic subjects for vases, frescoes and paintings of the great masters.

The feasts on Mount Olympus were similar to those enjoyed on earth save in abundance, superior taste, luxury and perhaps the addition of the divine ambrosia. A traditional ancient Roman banquet would have begun with eggs and ended with fruit, and the final course was often accompanied by sweet desserts such as cake.

Cake is a dish that has been around for thousands of years, and was enjoyed by the ancient Egyptians well before the Greeks and Romans had their fill. Paintings in the tomb of Pharaoh Ramesses II, who ruled from 1304 to 1237 B.C.E. show what archaeologists think might be a type of folded honey cake, likely made from flour, eggs, honey, dates and nuts. The Egyptian specialty feteer meshaltet, which is a thin folded pastry (and might even be the precursor to the French croissant), is descended from these cakes.

One of the first printed recipes for honey cake appears in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistae*, published in Greece in 180 B.C.E.. It is called *Enkhytoi* and the book describes it as a flat, molded cake made from honey, fine flour and eggs. Like many recipes of the time there were no proportions listed, but modern recreations of these cakes show us that the consistency is that of a sponge cake.

Birthday cakes are also ancient, as the first century poet, Ovid, wrote about in his elegiac letters, titled *Tristia*,..."

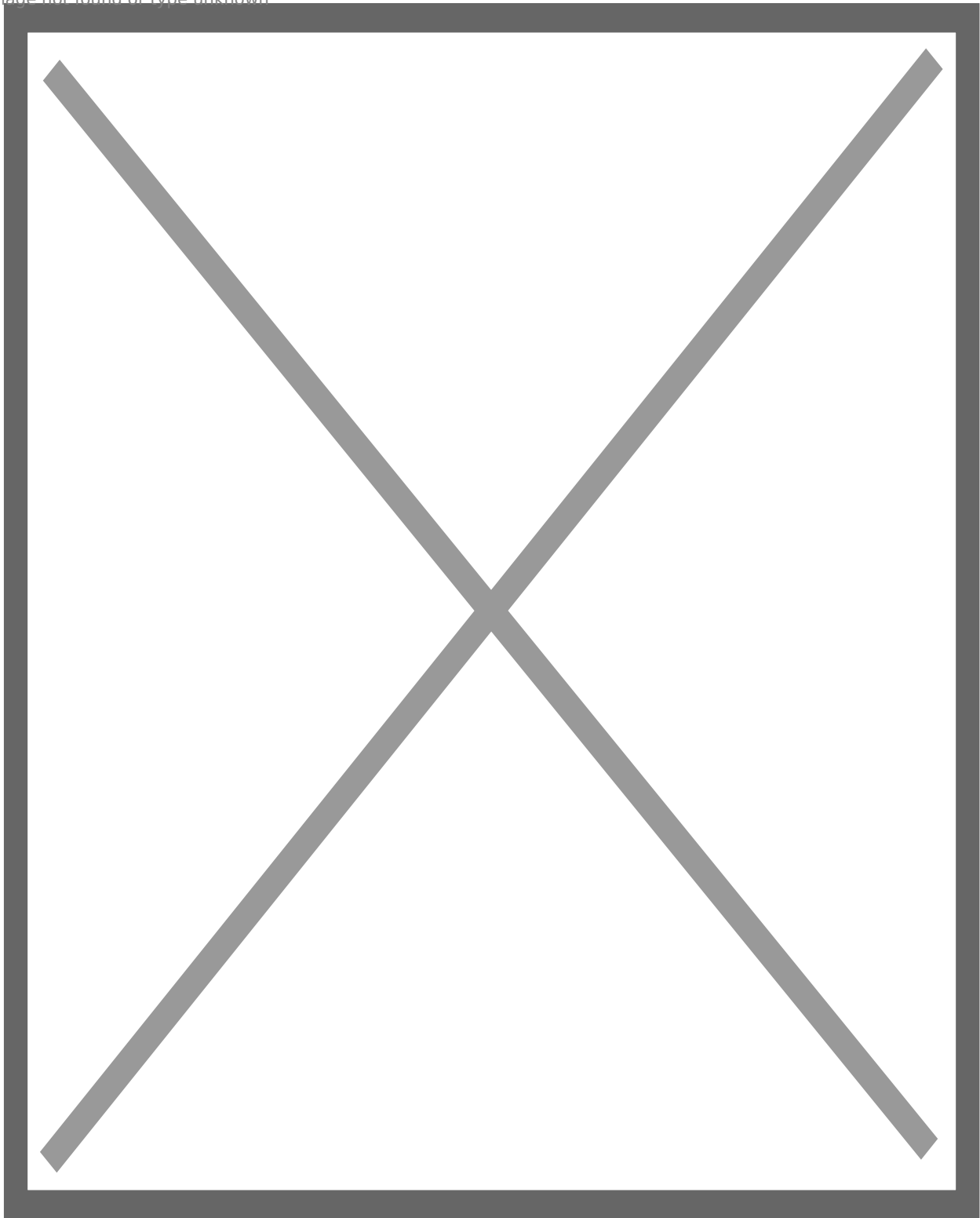
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Logic might have it that honey cakes very well could have been eaten at the monthly 20th celebrations? Just an idea that is fun to think about. I do wonder if there are recipes without the nuts.

Post by "Kalosyni" of September 25, 2022 at 7:31 PM

This recipe looks interesting, but I would guess this is a modern version of honey cake (no nuts). I like how she says it is good with coffee or tea, and you just make it an call some friends over, lol.

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[Greek Honey Cake](#)

Simple and extra moist Greek honey cake! Honey Cake Watch the Video My extra moist Greek honey cake is light, sweet, and has a lot of honey flavor. Orange zest...

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 6, 2023 at 5:10 PM

On ancient Greek diet:

Quote

Greeks of that time were very fond of fish, perhaps even more than we are today. For lunch, they would routinely dine on any fresh fish that was available, including sea bream, mullet, sardines, and eels.

There was always an assortment of legumes from which to choose, including lentils, beans, chickpeas, peas and broad beans to accompany the fish.

The eternal European staple of bread was always part of the midday meal, accompanied by cheese, olives, eggs, nuts, and fruit.

<https://greekreporter.com/2022/08/04/ancient-greeks-were-gourmands-with-a-preference-for-fish/>

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 6, 2023 at 5:18 PM

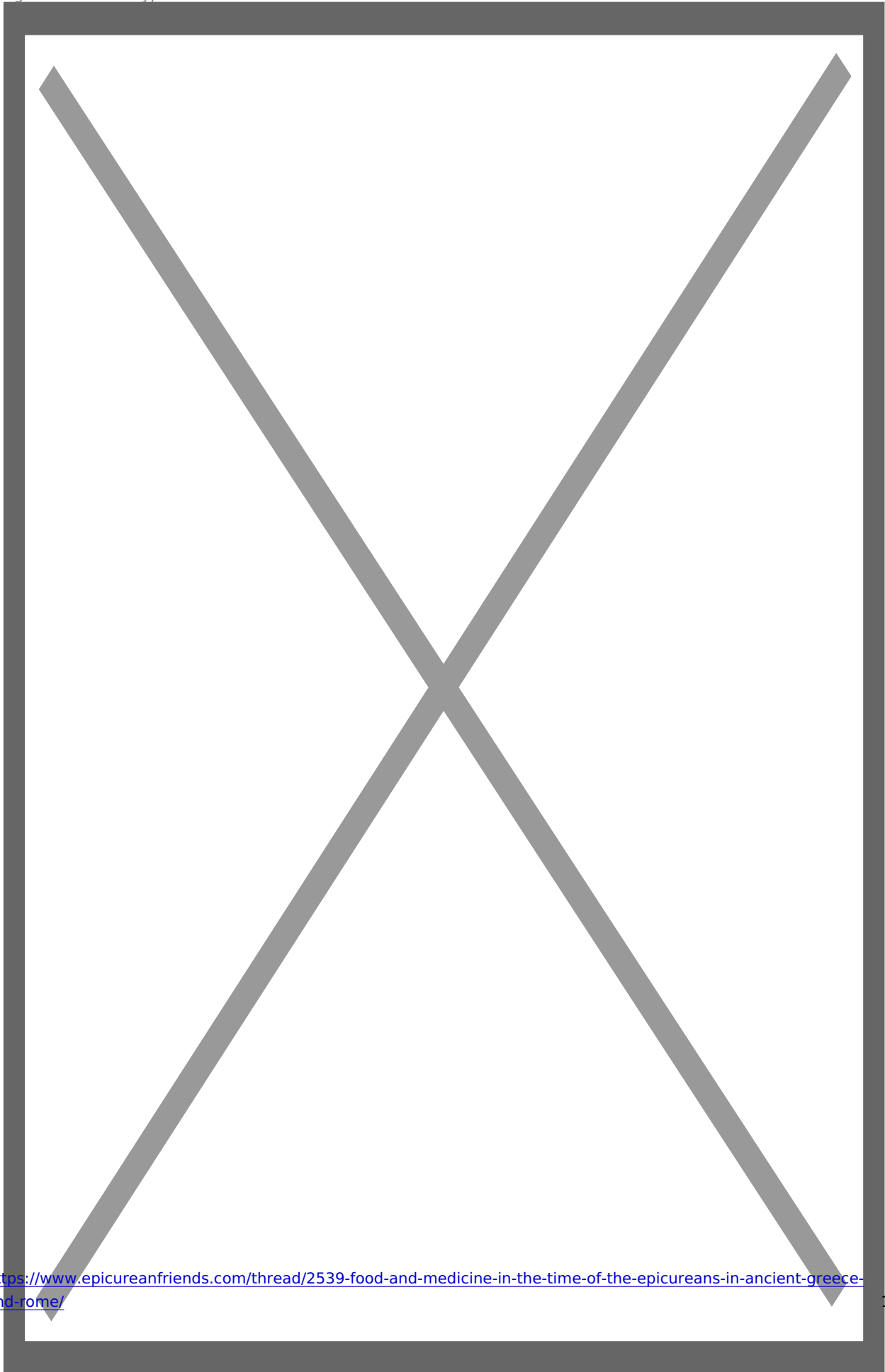
Another good article, the full article has lots of good details.

Quote

Ancient Greeks enjoyed a varied diet of vegetables, legumes, and fruit as the mainstay. But, being a coastal country with many islands, fish and seafood were an important part of the diet and animal husbandry and hunting brought meats and game to the menu. However, the consumption of fish and meat varied in accordance with the wealth and location of the household.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

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[List of the Various Foods Enjoyed by Ancient Greeks](#)

Ancient Greek foods were similar to the foods we know today, except the variety was limited. Learn about ancient Greek foods and how they evolved.
www.thespruceeats.com

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 19, 2023 at 5:50 PM

Homemade Cheese, In Ancient Roman Style:

Quote

Here's something that people made and ate more than two millennia ago, but familiar to all of us. Art historian and chef [Nancy De Lucia Real](#) shares a simple cheese recipe that Romans would have eaten in Gaul (modern-day France), cited in writer Pliny's Latin text, "Natural History" written in 77 AD, that says the best cheeses came from the villages near what is now the city of Nîmes in southern France. You don't need to go all the way to Europe to try this Roman staple -- this cheese is easily replicated at home.

Homemade Cheese

Makes one 4-inch round cheese

Since this traditional recipe uses organic whole milk and vinegar for coagulation, the resulting cheese is extremely fresh and without artificial additives. It will keep, covered in an airtight container and refrigerated, for 2 to 3 days.

1 gallon organic, whole milk

½ cup white, distilled vinegar

1-1/4 teaspoons salt

Pour the milk into a 10 to 12-quart saucepot and heat, stirring constantly, until almost boiling.

When milk begins to smoke and almost boils, remove the saucepot from heat.

Immediately stir in the vinegar; let stand 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, line a strainer with cheesecloth, and set it over a large pot or bowl (bowl should be placed inside the sink).

After 10 minutes, pour the milk-vinegar mixture into the cheesecloth set over strainer. The solids (curds) should separate from the yellowish liquid (whey).

Stir the salt into the whey in bowl and then pour it over the curds in the strainer.

Let the curds continue to drain in the strainer for one hour.

Discard the liquid or whey.

After the cheese has finished draining, tighten the cloth around the cheese.

Loosen the cheesecloth and, using a soup spoon (or one that is slightly larger), gently scoop out the cheese and transfer it to a glass or porcelain bowl measuring 8 to 9 inches in diameter.

Pat the cheese into a ball and cover it with plastic wrap.

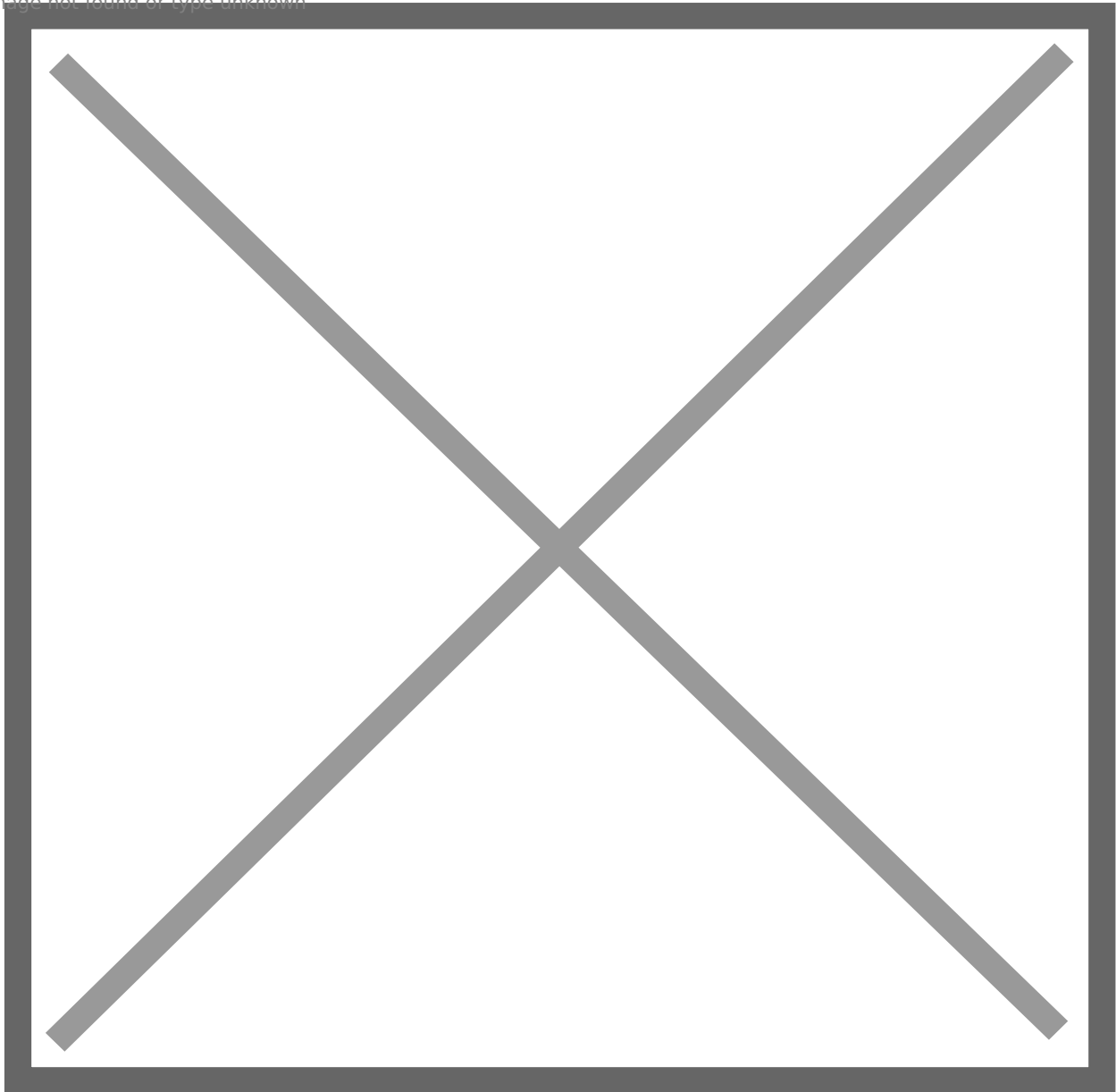
Store the fresh cheese in the refrigerator until ready to serve.

Homemade cheese keeps refrigerated in an airtight container for 2 to 3 days.

Variation: You can experiment with different varieties of cheese by adding ground black pepper, dried, red chili peppers, or your favorite herbs.

Display More

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[Recipe: Homemade Cheese, in the Ancient Roman Style](#)

This simple cheese recipe would have been made and eaten by Romans more than two millennia ago.

www.kcet.org

Post by “Pacatus” of September 27, 2023 at 5:33 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

My wife and I recently watched the Netflix series on the Blue Zones – places where a higher percentage of people live to healthy old age: <https://www.netflix.com/search?q=blue%20zones&jbv=81214929>

We had read the book years ago. I was particularly interested in the Greek island of Ikaria, because of the (loose) connection to Greek culture. Here is the article on Ikaria from the Blue Zone site: <https://www.bluezones.com/explorations/ikaria-greece/>

I have never been really careful with diet – largely ignoring, for example, my gluten sensitivity (which recently nailed me after a delicious pasta meal). Now, I am trying to cut out gluten-grains – as well as finely milled non-gluten breads and the like (I seem to recall that the rapid digestion of such can spike insulin). Non-gluten, intact grains only. Tonight will be lentils and brown rice, with a side of lean chicken and a small salad.

In recent years, I have also had two or three recurring (mild) bouts of gout – which is tuning me into anti-inflammation considerations, including a host of herbs and spices (e.g. ginger, garlic – of which we are robust consumers anyway – coriander, oregano, etc.: to list the more “Mediterranean” ones, although trade brought in, say, black pepper from India).

Okay, more veggies and fruits! **The wine stays!** But I am switching to organic wine with no added sulfites (like “Our Daily Red”: <https://ourdailywines.com/products/our-d...ganic-red-blend>.)

Basically, the “Mediterranean Diet” without the bread and pasta (and pizza – Oh no!).

+++++

Disclosure: I’m 72. 😊 😎

Post by “Pacatus” of September 27, 2023 at 7:49 PM

“Nobody gives a damn about schedules on Ikaria. Businesses open late. Time slows. Days slide into a gentle rhythm.” <https://adventure.com/blue-zones-ikaria-greece/>

“My grandmother is 88 and acts like she is 30. She gardens, takes care of her animals, goes out for coffee, jokes about sex, dances at parties. She has even been known to play spin the bottle!” Eftychia Afianes (ibid).

– Sounds **exactly** like my paternal grandmother, who died one month shy of her 99th birthday. [She is my ultimate Epicurean hero! Her uptight, stoical-virtue-bound son (my father, who didn’t like her much) sadly died at age 59.] She was an avid gardener, who would hoe and grub in the

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

dirt all day -- and then come down the stairs in her evening dress to go play bridge with "the ladies." She normally ate frugally -- but her garlic-stuffed leg of lamb on the occasional family feast was quasi-legendary! She was a feisty flapper-era (as a young woman) proto-feminist. And I will always be grateful to her for how much she shared.

Post by "Pacatus" of October 14, 2023 at 5:45 PM

" ... in Classical Era Athens, the purchase of all fish by a wealthy citizen was considered an undemocratic act since he left nothing for the rest of the people." <https://greekreporter.com/2022/08/04/anc...rence-for-fish/> cited by [Kalosyni](#) in post #43 above.

After reading "Cicero and His Clamorous Silences" by Aoiz and Boeri (https://www.academia.edu/82815606/CICER...MOROUS_SILENCES), I am convinced this criticism would be endorsed by Epicurus and the Garden.

Post by "Kalosyni" of October 14, 2023 at 6:48 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

... in Classical Era Athens, the purchase of all fish by a wealthy citizen was considered an undemocratic act since he left nothing for the rest of the people." <https://greekreporter.com/2022/08/04/anc...rence-for-fish/> cited by Kalosyni in post #43 above.

I somehow didn't see that in that article, and it is a little bit confusing because that same article says this:

Quote

As for processed fish, such as preserved tuna and anchovies, they were widely consumed by all social classes and were the product of a very flourishing trade throughout the Mediterranean and the adjacent seas.

Post by "Pacatus" of October 14, 2023 at 6:56 PM

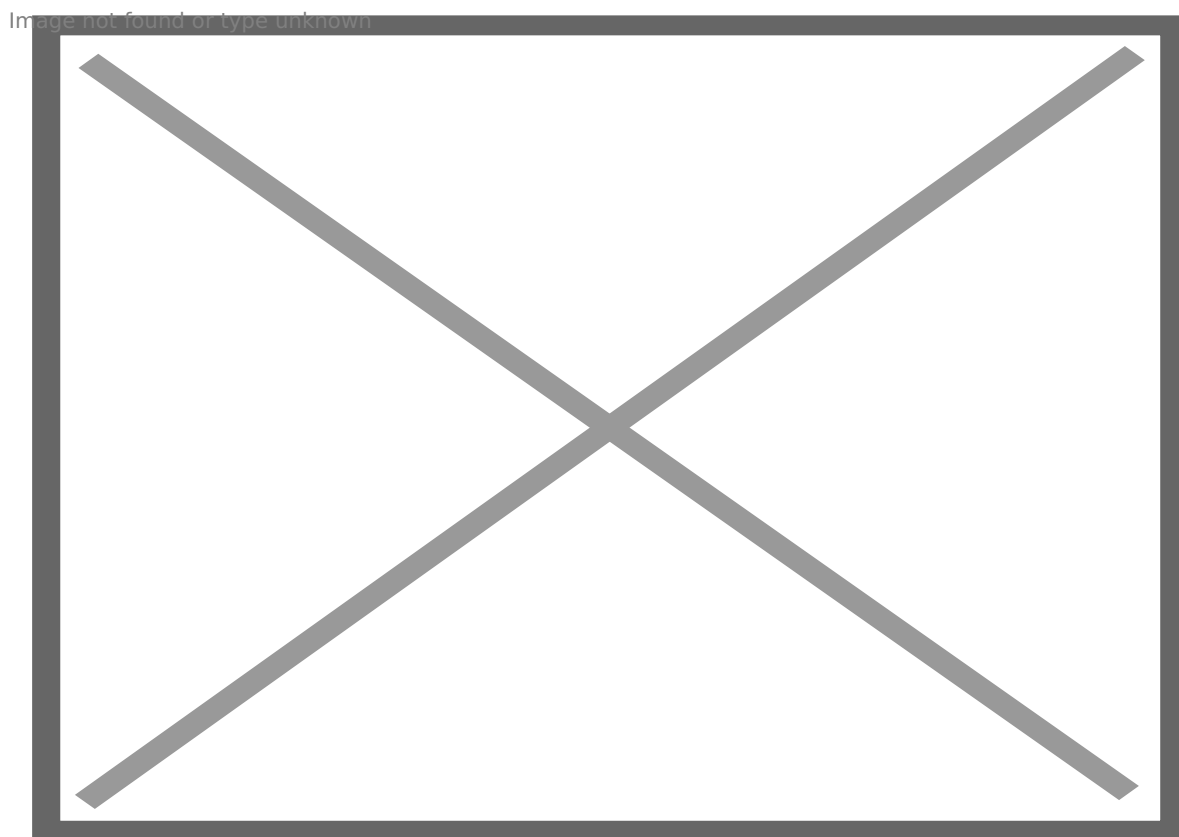
<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

[Kalosyni](#) Quote "As for processed fish, such as preserved tuna and anchovies, they were widely consumed by all social classes and were the product of a very flourishing trade throughout the Mediterranean and the adjacent seas."

My only guess is that there was a societal norm aimed at preventing the very wealthy from negatively impacting that wide consumption.

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 27, 2023 at 9:50 AM

Found this article on history of cheese in Greece:



[Intro to Greek Cheeses](#)

GREEK CHEESES - A SHORT HISTORY The single most distinguishing characteristic of Greek cheese is that most of it is made with sheep's milk, goat's milk, or a...
www.dianekochilas.com

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 4, 2024 at 11:40 AM

In last night's Zoom meeting a PDF document by [Bryan](#) contained an image of Epicurus with calendula flowers. (Bryan perhaps if by chance you feel you want to upload the image to the gallery?)

I looked up and found this info [on Wikipedia](#).

Quote

[Ancient Romans](#) and [Greeks](#) used the golden *Calendula* in many rituals and ceremonies, sometimes wearing crowns or garlands made from the flowers. ...

...*Calendula officinalis* oil is still used medicinally as an [anti-inflammatory](#) and a remedy for healing wounds.

Post by “Don” of October 22, 2024 at 7:55 PM

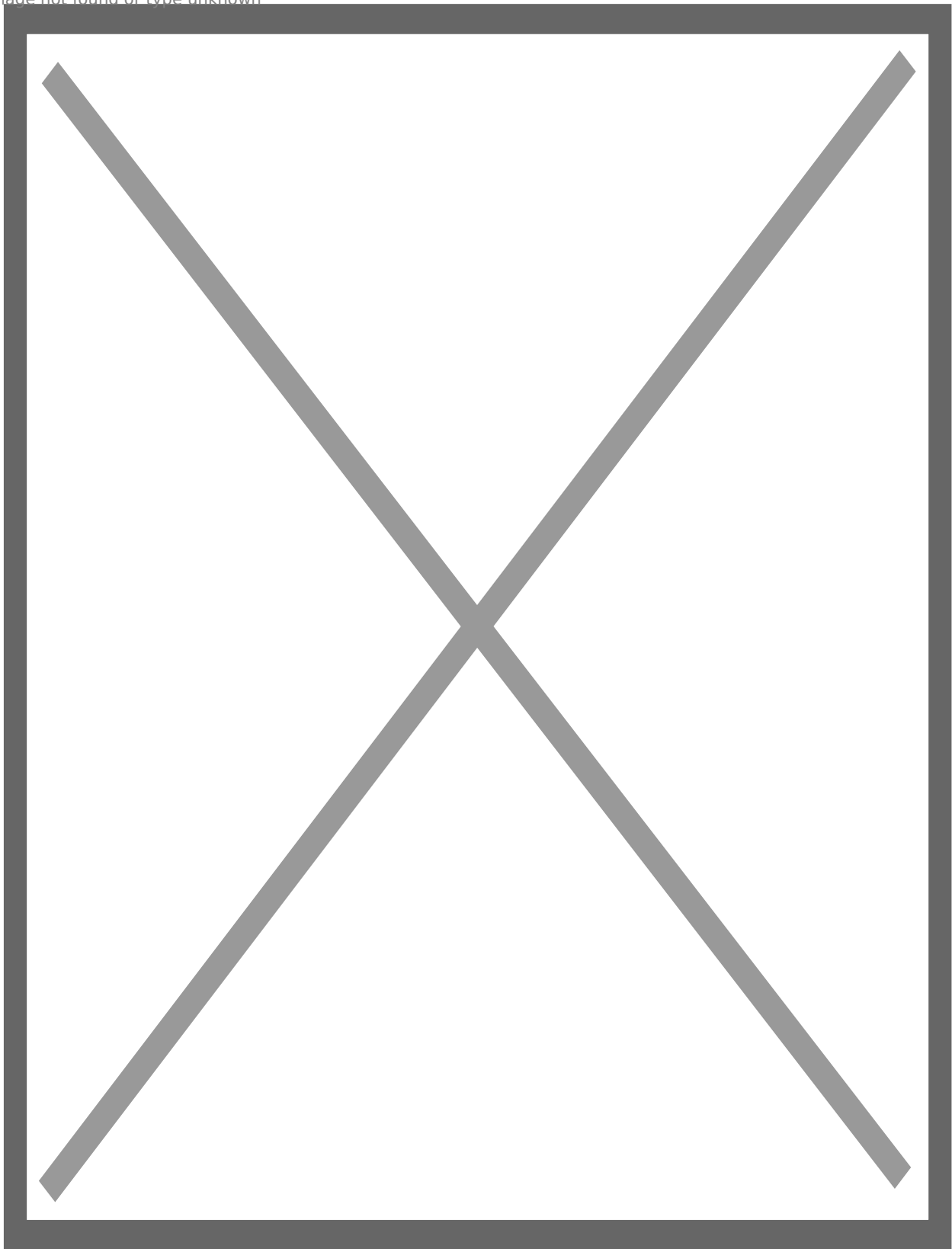
Max Miller has some great Greek and Roman recipes and history on his channel.

[Ancient — Recipes — Tasting History](#)

Post by “Kalosyni” of October 25, 2024 at 2:43 PM

I might try this one since I have some pears and eggs. I don't have the fish sauce, and thinking of ways to tweek this into a sweeter dessert, and may use butter instead of olive oil. 😊

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[Patina de Piris \(Patina of Pears\) — Tasting History](#)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

A sweet egg frittata-like dish that has a classic combination of ancient Roman flavors of long pepper, garum, and cumin
www.tastinghistory.com

Post by “Don” of October 25, 2024 at 4:42 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I don't have the fish sauce

I hear that you can also use SE Asian fish sauce if you can't get a hold of garum. Any half decent Asian grocery store should have a selection.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 20, 2025 at 11:00 AM

I just found this website which has recipes:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/cook-classical-feast-nine-recipes-ancient-greece-and-rome>

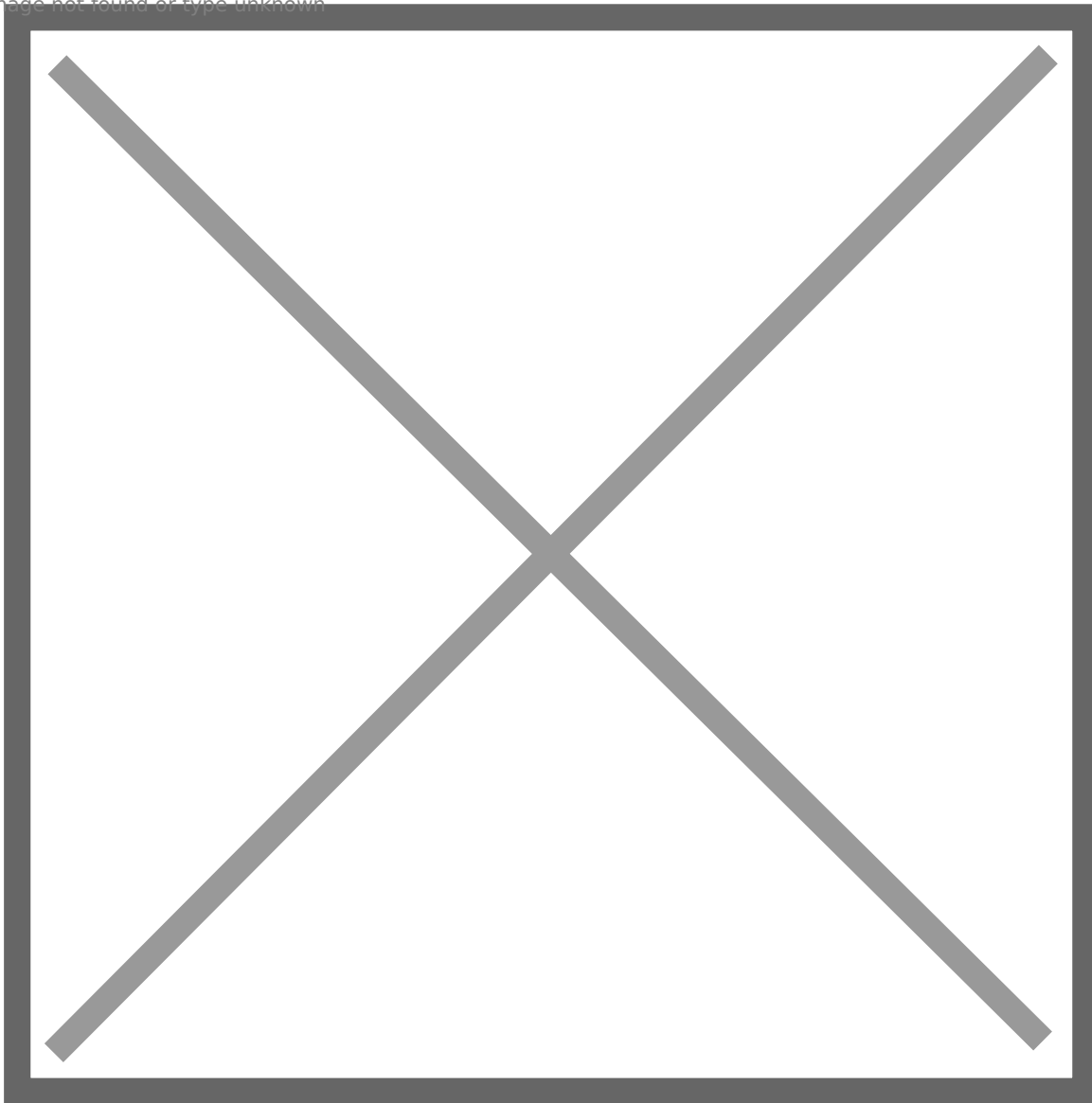
Post by “Kalosyni” of August 20, 2025 at 3:38 PM

I just found this recipe, but finding good and fresh sesame seeds in my neck of the woods might not be easy. (Could probably find them at a health food store, next time I go into a big city).

This seems like a celebratory type of food...perhaps something which could be served at a Twentieth feast:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

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[Pasteli | Ancient Greek Honey Sesame Bar | Lemon & Olives | Exploring Greece and Beyond: Mediterranean Diet Tips & Recipes for Wellness, Nutrition, and Healthy Living](#)

This classic Ancient Greek recipe is for what is know as the world's first energy bar. Made with sesame seeds and honey, give ancient greek pasteli a try

www.lemonandolives.com

Ingredients:

Quote

- 1 cup sesame seeds
- 1/3 cup pistachios optional, cut in halves
- 1/2 cup honey

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2539-food-and-medicine-in-the-time-of-the-epicureans-in-ancient-greece-and-rome/>

- 1 inch lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup sugar optional

Post by “Pacatus” of August 21, 2025 at 3:04 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I just found this website which has recipes:

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/blog/cook-clas...greece-and-rome>

