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## Vegan Made in Greece

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One of my favourite ways to spend a Sunday morning is to take the metro to Syntagma Square, head down Mitropoleos Street and, after passing the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, turn left and lose myself in the picturesque alleyways of Plaka until I am directly below the Acropolis. It is a journey in time which allows me to reconnect with the city's past and present.

So, it is a Sunday, early in May. I am walking along Mitropoleos, which is bustling with life as the tourist season picks up pace. I am stopped by two English girls who ask me if I know of any local vegan restaurant. I think about it for a few seconds, feeling slightly embarrassed because nothing springs to mind, even though a number of such restaurants have recently opened in the centre of Athens. Then, a thought came out of the blue to rescue me. Perhaps not so much a thought as a memory... of my mum's delicious *yemista* (stuffed vegetables)! I smile at them and say: *"Girls, at any taverna or restaurant with Greek cuisine, you will find plenty of vegan options, whether they be salads, pies, legumes or oil-based dishes. You don't have to look for a dedicated vegan restaurant, simply try the traditional Greek dishes and most definitely the yemista!"*

And as simple as that, one Sunday in the centre of Athens, the seed was planted for *My Greek Vegan Food*, a book that aspires to introduce the global vegan community to Greek cuisine as an outstanding food choice while at the same time reintroducing us Greeks to our own cuisine in its vegan version. Greek cuisine features an array of delicious green 'treasures' that make it more topical than ever and are repositioning it at the centre of the global dietary debate.

I therefore invite you to join me, and Eva Monochari, on a tour of the vegan side of Greek cuisine with attractions that include a wide variety of traditional and modern recipes which we Greeks savour at home on a daily basis and enjoy at tavernas and restaurants across the country. Recipes with pure ingredients from our homeland which are both easy-to-find and inexpensive. At the end of the day, the cuisine of the Greek mama is not only delicious but also good for the planet, healthy and vegan. Enjoy!

*Ioanna M. Pavlaki*

