TRADITIONAL FORMS OF NUTRITION IN CYPRUS AS KNOWN FROM WRITTEN SOURCES AND ORAL TRADITION (18th - 20th century).

Nutrition, the main purpose of which is subsistence, is essentially a cultural phenomenon and deserves to be studied as such. Even in its simplest form, nutrition depends on many factors, such as the geomorphology, the climate, and the general environment of the area concerned; food habits are formed from the constant and diachronic interaction between man and his surroundings. Furthermore, nutrition depends on economic and social factors which are influenced by political events, on religious beliefs, and on the general modus vivendi, as it is established by tradition. Traditional forms of nutrition reflect the standard of living, but also the social and cultural levels of the people who have created them. Consequently, social differentiation can be seen in the use of more sophisticated and refined food habits as compared with simpler forms of nutrition.

Cyprus has always been a fertile island, rich in natural resources. It enjoys the moderate climate of the Eastern Mediterranean and its position made it a crossroads and a trading post between the Orient and the Occident.

During the three centuries of Ottoman rule (1570-1878) and subsequent British administration (1878-1960), the economy of Cyprus relied mainly on farming, stock-breeding and the export of agricultural products.

Our knowledge of nutrition during the Ottoman and British periods, is mainly based on scanty information derived from written sources, such as travellers' accounts, consular reports, historical documents, and contemporary scholarly studies. In most of these sources, the products of the island are mentioned and evaluated primarily as articles of trade, and not as foodstuffs. Occasionally, however, some remarks are made on food habits, or mention is made of a supper that left a good or bad impression. Other important information are the lists of property of deceased persons, among which foodstuffs are included as personal belongings. Specific containers or kitchen accessories listed as personal belongings of the deceased can suggest the preparation of a particular food. Similar information can be gained from the recorded foodstuffs in the storerooms of monasteries. Fragmentary information such as this, combined with more concrete evidence in later periods, as well as with oral tradition, presents a comprehensive picture of the traditional nutrition in Cyprus during the recent past.

Looking at nutrition in Cyprus chronologically, the 18th century was characterised by political upheavals and natural disasters such as drought, locust attacks, earthquakes, plague and famine. The Archimandrite Kyprianos in his History informs us that in the years 1757-1758 there was such a great dearth of food in the island, because of drought and locusts, that the people were cooking wild colocassia, a noxious root, and eating it with other wild herbs (Kyprianos in Cobham 1908, 355). At moments of despair, whenever excessive taxation caused a shortage of foodstuffs, people resorted to uprisings against both the Ottoman authorities and the Christian notables of the island. Such circumstances and the consequent depletion of the population had a serious effect on the availability of agricultural produce on which the people depended for their survival. Even during the time of British administration, most of the population continued to be rural and as late as 1881, only 16.8% lived in towns (Georgallides 1979, 54).

The Tanzimat reforms which characterised the last phase of Ottoman rule in Cyprus (1830-1878), stimulated a rather slow progress. Farmers continued to be heavily taxed. And as they possessed small land holdings and had no advanced means for proper cultivation - rude plough drawn by oxen are still used - they remained so poor that a serious crop failure was enough to bring them to near famine (report of acting Consul Riddell for the year 1873, in Papadopoullos 1980, 157-158).
The first fifty years of British administration were characterised by very slow growth and high taxation. Agricultural production continued to face serious problems. In the 1902 drought, people were taken to court for eating weeds from ploughed fields. The depletion of income led to indebtedness and to exploitation by money-lenders, which even in the 1950's was difficult to overcome (Christodoulou 1959, 124).

Both travellers' accounts and consular reports of the 18th and 19th centuries give us a contradictory picture in their description of Cyprus. On the one hand they stress the fertility of the island and the potential of natural resources of a land abounding with all things necessary for life, so much so that the island was called "Macaria" (happy land). On the other hand, reports lament the condition on the island.
In a Journal of 1779 we read: "The soil is exceedingly luxuriant and the farmers would be immensely rich but for the heavy taxes levied by the Porte and the rapaciousness of the Turkish governors, who are continually plundering them till they have reduced them to the state of wretched poverty"

(Cobham 1908, 324).
By the mid-18th century Drummond states clearly: "The trade and produce of this island do not amount to the tenth part of what they might yield were they in the hands of industrious people, governed by just and equitable laws, and the property so secured as that their children should enjoy the fruits of their ingenuity and labour" (Drummond 1750, in Cobham 1908, 281).
In 1801 Clarke reports on the situation more forcibly with a few words: "Agriculture neglected - inhabitants oppressed - population destroyed - pestiferous air - contagion - poverty - indolence - desolation" (Clarke 1801 in Cobham 1908, 380).

However exaggerated these statements may seem, they conform with later reports such as that of the British Consul Niven Kerr made in 1844: "The Turks seldom pay any attention to agriculture beyond what is absolutely necessary for their subsistence, and the Greeks are so reduced in number in consequence of the thousands who have from time to time emigrated in order to avoid the heavy taxes levied on them, that the produce of the Island is quite insignificant to what it might otherwise be, as but a very small proportion of the arable land is cultivated..." (report of Consul Niven Kerr in Papadopoullos 1980, 16). Even later, scarcely one fifteenth of the arable land was under cultivation and production reached only one half of its capacity in 1862 (Consular report by R. H. Lang for the year 1862 in Papadopoullos 1980, 69).

Against this background, Turner (1815) summarily describes the diet of Cypriot peasants: "Their food is of coarse wheatbread and herbs with, at rare intervals, an occasional home-fed chicken, and the wine of the country, which is bought very cheap..." (Turner 1815 in Cobham 1908, 449).

Cyprus produced wheat and barley in abundance and bread was the main substance of nourishment. Wheat and other similar grains were cultivated on the island since Prehistoric times; during the Roman period Cyprus was, according to Pliny, one of the provinces that sent grain to Rome, and in later times it continued to be a source of grain for other countries. In the 18th and 19th centuries, despite its neglected state, the production of grain on the island was still considerable so that, even after supplying its own population, it exported annually many cargoes of excellent wheat. Mariti, who lived in Cyprus between 1760 and 1767, informs us that, although the Porte did not allow the export of foodstuffs from its own territories to countries not under its rule, every year vessels carried large quantities of grain to Leghorn, Genoa, Marseille, and Malta (Mariti 1971,119 - 120). Turner (1815)

mentions instances of the secret loading of wheat and the smuggling of corn which should not be exported except to Constantinople (Cobham 1908, 431, 438). "When the Porte in 1769 declared war against Russia", narrates Archimandrite Kyprianos, "necessaries for the conduct of a war which touched the very heart of the Empire were demanded from all its subject provinces, and Cyprus too was ordered to contribute some tons of biscuit, ten times as much as it could afford. But though the store of grain was scanty, for all its complaints and and entreaties it could obtain no reduction of the appointed quantity. So stores were chosen, flour prepared, men appointed to knead it, with overseers..." (Cobham 1908, 362).
That this principle foodstuff could affect political matters, is also seen during a rebellion put down in 1764, when Ahmed Pasha from Caramania seized on the mills of the village of Kythrea - Kythrea had 32 water-mills for grinding corn - so that he could stop supplies getting to Nicosia, the rebel's stronghold. Again in 1765 300 Turks seized the water-mills which ground flour for the capital. When Khalil Agha invested Nicosia so that no one could enter or leave it, the inhabitants of the capital began to suffer from hunger. "Flour failed, we ate broad beans and haricot beans, pulse and vegetables for nearly fifty days. What little flour we could get we had ground in hand-mills" complains Archimandrite Kyprianos (Cobham 1908, 351, 359, 360).

Until the early 20th century, wheat and barley were brought by donkey to the water-mills, which belonged to monasteries and large estates, in order to be turned into flour. Housewives worked flour with water into a dough in wooden troughs and made loaves of bread which were baked in private ovens built in the courtyards of houses. Additional details on the production of bread are given by Salvator, the Archduke of Austria who visited Nicosia in 1873. He noticed that many houses had a perfectly round baking-oven with a marble floor and stone sides, covered on the top with clay and straw. He also observed the "tabayia", a basket suspended from the ceiling to store the baked bread (Salvator 1983, 22, 24). Bread was usually prepared once a week and had to be preserved in an airy place away from animals, especially mice. The device described by Salvator is still in use in remote villages.
Even in towns, where by the end of 19th century were professional bakers, housewives preferred to make their own bread. Along with bread they used to bake biscuits which last for months. In some villages delicious biscuits were made with a mixture of flour from cereals, broad beans and chik peas. They are still known as "arkatena".

Pies made of dough containing aromatic seeds of Pistacia terebinthus were also favoured (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 100-101).
During the first decades of the 20th century, there was an increase in the non-farming population who lived on bread baked in towns. Australian bread was found to be cheaper, and so, in the 1930's less than half of the flour used by bakers was of Cyprus origin (Christodoulou 1959, 124).

Visitors to Cyprus, who generally provide scant information on the food habits of the inhabitants, seem to have been deeply impressed by the quality and taste of the Cypriot bread.
Mariti reports that "the best wheat of all comes from the district of Pafo and Fontana Amorosa... Persons who have seen the bread made in the island from this very grain, and even from that grown in the rest of the island, have found it not only of excellent quality, but the best and finest you would get throughout Syria and other parts of the Levant. It owes this pre-eminence to the diligence and address of the women, who pick over the wheat very carefully, and take out the grains which would make the bread brownish, but these do not exist in the proportion which some suppose. Even after cleaning it thus they wash it, and reject the grains which have been eaten out by weevil, an easy task, because they float on the water in which they are washed. They never remit their care even in times of famine: thinking, very reasonably, that the loss is hardly felt, while no grinding can make the empty grain into flour, but mere bran; and lastly that they assure their health by cleaning the wheat, and getting rid of other seeds and of earth, which gives no nourishment, and is even very hurtful" (Mariti 1971, 120-121).
In 1801 Edward Daniel Clarke observed in a house in the village of Athienou the kind of stones used for grinding corn, a task which was undertaken solely by females, and recalled the observation of the Saviour alluding to this custom in His prediction concerning the day of judgment: "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left" (Cobham 1908, 385). Ground wheat formed a traditional dish, called "pourkouri", which is still very common in Cyprus. Wheat was washed, boiled in a cauldron, spread on the flat roof to dry, and then ground with the mill. It was then cooked with some oil and water.
Ground wheat is till now prepared with milk and then dried. When boiled it makes a very nutritious soup, called "trachanas".
Dr Hume (1802) was another admirer of Cypriot bread and ends his account of the island as follows: "The bread made in private houses in Cyprus is unequalled, except perhaps by that which is prepared for the table of the Sultan at

Constantinopple. It is composed of what is called "fiore di farina". The flour is divided into three parts to obtain the kind which is proper for manipulation. The first separated is the coarse and husky part: the next, the white impalpable powder: after which operation remains the "fiore di farina", which is neither very finely pulverized, nor remarkably white, and is by far the smallest quantity of the whole mass. This is found to contain the purest part of the wheat, and to make the finest bread" (Cobham 1908, 343).
According to Kinneir (1814), at the dinner given by the Archbishop, the bread offered, which was white as snow and baked with milk instead of water, was the best he remembers to have tasted (Cobham 1908, 416). It is worth mentioning that in some regions of Cyprus, housewives still make for Easter a kind of bread prepared in a similar way; these loaves, covered with sesame, are called "galena" which means "made of milk" (gala = milk).

Bread was consumed in large quantities even in the 20th century. In his survey of the rural life in Cyprus in the year 1929, B. J. Surridge reports that a family with three children consumed 3kg of bread a day (Surridge 1930, 32; see also Ionas 1994, 441). In cases of need, people could actually live on bread. Thus, during a period of famine which afflicted the island in 1869, as stated in the consular report of 1872, a family of six persons could be maintained in a state of health and activity upon the small allowance of 40 lbs of flour and 3 lbs of olives per week (Report by Consul Lang in Papadopoullos 1980, 316).

Second in importance after bread, olive oil and olives constitute a critical part of the daily diet.
Olives are among the chief indigenous trees of Cyprus. The island was known in antiquity as a producer of good oil; Strabo (63 b.C. - 25 a.D.) calls Cyprus "euelaios" (Strabo XIV, 684, 5) and Cypriot oil was considered to be very light and digestive.
Olive trees are constantly found with carob trees at the base of mountains and skirting the plains, forming a line of demarcation between the uncultivated mountainsides and the tilled land below. During the Mediaeval period, olive trees were abundant and scattered all over the island, but many of them were in a wild state. The Venetian authorities took special measures to promote their cultivation. Under Ottoman rule, olive groves extended up to the very walls of Nicosia. In the 18th century we are informed that the olive trees were not as numerous as they had formerly been and that their produce was not always sufficient for the needs of the inhabitants, while previously oil had contributed to commerce

as well (Constantius 1766 in Cobham 1908, 309 - 310). This source corroborates the information we get from the Consular reports of the second half of the 19th century which record that barely enough olive oil was produced for the supply of the inhabitants and it was sometimes necessary to import oil into Cyprus to meet the requirements of local consumption (report of the Vice-Consul White for the year 1863 in Papadopoullos 1980, 83, also A. R. Savile 1878, 93).
Bread and olives formed the main meal during work in the fields both of the peasant and of the shepherd. Olives were preserved in brine and vinegar ("colymbates") or in salt. They were kept in earthen jars or in "damesjeanes", and were carried in the fields in a small reed-container called "karakolios". To extract the oil, the olives were crushed by the roller-mill in which the mill stone turned around a central post by man- or animal-power. The pulp was then placed into baskets and pressed with a screw press. In some areas, especially in Paphos, olives used to be boiled and then crushed and pressed to give a thick, heavy, olive oil, called "black oil" (Christodoulou 1959, 172).
Olive oil was necessary for cooking or seasoning boiled pulses and vegetables. Traditional all over Cyprus and still very common is the olive pie, "elioti", which is made of dough mixed with olives, onions and parsley, and baked in the oven.

Oil was also extracted from sesame for local consumption. "Samolad" is mentioned in the 16th century by Lusignan (Lusignan 1580, 222; see also Turner 1815 in Cobham 1908, 426). It was spread on bread instead of butter. Salvator describes a sesame-oil mill he saw in Nicosia in 1873. It consisted of a horizontal wheel, which turned upon a round stone with a wooden hoop forming a brim over it.The oil ran through a hole on one side of the hoop into a vase underneath. It was then strained from this vase into salt water, left there for twelve hours, and then was put into an oven for six hours more. The resulting white paste was sold to make "halava"; of the red residue more oil was gained by putting it into a cauldron with cold water and treading it, which made the oil rise to the surface. Sesame oil was consumed in great quantities by the Greeks during Lent (Salvator 1983, 68; see also Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 127).
According to Captain Savile's report in 1878, oil extracted from the seed of the jujube tree, Zizyphus jujuba, as well as that obtained from glasswort, were used when the supply of olive oil was insufficient (Savile 1878, 95).

The carob tree, producing a horn-shaped fruit, generally called St. John's bread, is found in most parts of the island. Carobs are very sweet and pleasant to the taste. Early

travellers' accounts inform us that people used to take out the seed and munch the rind.From carob was expressed - and still is - a kind of juice or honey which made an excellent condiment which was used as a sauce in several favourite dishes (see for example Cotovicus (1598) and Heyman (early 18th century) in Cobham 1908, 188 - 189, and 247 respectively). Turner (1815) tells us that the fruit of the Cypriot carob trees was the most esteemed by the Venetians who made an agreeable paste sweetmeat of it (Cobham 1908, 444).
Honey made from carobs is black; the white honey of the hives was plentiful and delicious (Kyprianos 1788, 544). Beekeeping flourished especially in monasteries where both honey and wax were needed. Beehives are included in the property of the monasteries recorded in the 18th/19th centuries and are described by travellers of the same period who were impressed by their peculiar form of construction: "They build up a wall formed entirely of earthen cylinders placed one above the other, horizontally, and closed at their extremities with mortar..." (Clarke (1801), in Cobham 1908, 386). Although, according to Possot's earlier account (1533) (Cobham 1908, 65), on the outside of the walls of the houses there were small holes for the bees to go in and out, and the wax and honey were thus inside the houses, honey was not part of the everyday diet and was rather used as a delicacy as well as a medicament. For some traditional pastries, however, honey is indispensable. Such are the "millopites", flat round pies made of thin leaves of dough, which were fried in pig's fat and while still hot were poured over with honey.

A substitute for honey was the boiled thick and sweet grape juice. Grapes were abundant and of excellent quality. "Perhaps there is no part in the world where the vine yields such redundant and luscious fruit. The juice of the Cyprian grape resembles a concentrated essence" notices Clarke (1801) (Cobham 1908, 380). Grapes were eaten as a fruit but more often were consumed as raisins. Those called zabib, a large black and fine fruit, dried naturally by the sun, are mentioned by Porcacchi in 1585 (Cobham 1908, 166).
Cypriots used grape juice for a variety of by-products which formed part of their diet; these are "kiofteri" and "palouzes", a kind of sweetmeat with must-jelly as the main ingredient; also "soutzoukkos" made of almonds or nuts covered with grape juice jelly. According to Archimandrite Kyprianos (1788), several sweetmeats were made from grape juicewith apples, pears, nuts and almonds; in combination with wheat they made the so called "portos" (Kyprianos 1788, 543).
The main product of vines, however, is wine, and Cyprus was renowned for it since ancient times. The first wine drinkers are depicted in an early 3rd century house in Paphos, called

the House of Dionysos. Wine has always been used at meals and also was a primary commodity of commerce. During the period under consideration there is plenty of information and Mariti wrote a book about wines in Cyprus (Mariti 1984). The wine of the island was so famous that "it was said to possess the power of restoring youth to age, and animation to those who were at the point of death" (Clarke (1801) in Cobham 1908, 380). The most celebrated Cypriot wine was Commandaria, which received its name from having been grown on the property of the Knight Templars. Both red wines and white wines were excellent but so strong that for ordinary use it was necessary to add twice as much water as wine. According to Van Bruyn (1683), it was possible to find wine of even a hundred years old, for when a father married his child he presented him with a vessel of the best wine he had, and whenever this was tapped it was refilled with a like quantity of the same kind of wine, so that it always kept its old goodness (Cobham 1908, 243).The oldest and best wine was kept for the most important events in a family's life. Mariti tells us that it was customary on the birth of a child for a father to bury a jar full of wine well sealed, and this was kept until the day of his or her marriage when it was served at the wedding feast and distributed among relatives and friends (Mariti 1971, 116). Wine was also served after the funeral together with bread, olives and cheese, and even the bones of the dead, when exhumed, were washed with Commandaria.

Wine was used in cooking but mainly as a food preservative, especially for meat.

Traditionally wine was kept in large earthen jars, tarred within to prevent the clay from drawing the wine. Hence it derived a tarry taste about which many travellers complained. The presence of thousands of wine jars, still found buried up to the middle in the earth in the storerooms of old houses all over the island, testifies to the wide consumption of wine, even if we consider as exaggerated Ludwig von Suchen's (14th century) view that "in all the world there are no greater or better drinkers than in Cyprus" (Cobham 1908, 20-21). According to the survey made by Surridge in 1929, each family consumed annually about 50 bottles of wine and 20 bottles of spirit (Surridge 1930, 22). The latter was mainly "zivania" (Cyprus eau de vie), a raw spirit distilled from grapes, or the remnants after pressing for wine. "Zivania" has alkohol up to 50 strength, and is still a common traditional drink in Cyprus (Christodoulou 1959, 162). Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter (late 19th / early 20th century) refers also to the production of a kind of brandy to which sugar, anise and mastic were added. Tasteful liqueurs used to be produced in small quantities in the monasteries (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 109).

Besides grapes, other fruits (mostly those peculiar to southern countries), such as citrons, oranges, lemons, dates, figs (green and dry), apricots, pomegranates, were abundant and cheap. In the accounts of visitors and in consular reports these fruits are mentioned with admiration:"The desserts on their tables consisted of the finest fruits, musk and water melons, apricots, etc." remarks Dr Hume who continues with his comments: "The musk-melons we seldom tasted,on account of their supposed tendency to produce disease, but the water melons afforded an agreeable beverage, peculiarly grateful in a hot climate" (Hume (1801), in Cobham 1908, 341).
By the beginning of British rule, melons and water-melons were produced in considerable quantities.In his report in 1878, Savile describes the variety of melons called "tumburae", as sweet and well-flavoured (Savile 1878,93).
In earlier days (at least in Mediaeval and Turkish times) fruit orchards were largely the preserve of estate owners and wealthy townsmen for the enjoyment of both fruit and shade (Christodoulou 1959, 173).

In the 19th century, the extensive gardens within the walls of Nicosia continued to abound in fig, mulberry, orange, lemons, pomegranate trees , palm trees and apricots (Clarke (1801),Turner (1815), in Cobham 1908, 385, 436). Apart from private gardens, there were, according to Salvator, public gardens within the boundaries of the city, occupying more than one half of the whole extent of it. Mention is made of sweet orange-shaped lemons which were very cheap and which could be bought by the poorest classes; also citrons of an extraordinary size, with very few stones, and a kind of white paste inside. They were often preserved by covering them with wax, and were eaten either fresh or as a preserve, cut in slices, with sugar.
Dates were dark-coloured, but very good. Bunches of dates were wrapped up in soft straw mats to protect them from ravens and other birds (Salvator 1983, 26). Date palms existed in Cyprus in antiquity (Michaelides forthcoming). In recent times palm trees are found in urban areas or large villages, mostly associated with Moslems.
The apricot is described as the finest fruit with the best variety being found in Famagusta. One variety has a smooth shiny skin like a nectarine; another, called the "caisha", is sweet-kernelled and very luscious (Clarke in Cobham 1908, 379, Consular report for the year 1863 in Papadopoullos 1980, 84, Savile 1878, 92).
Magda Ohnefalsch-Richer informs us that people in Cyprus called the"caisha" "Aphrodite's breasts" and used to cook them with lamb's meat (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 121).
The pomegranate, believed to have been first planted on Cyprus

by Aphrodite, is abundant and widely used, as it is associated with fertility and the cult of the dead. Famagusta was an important centre of its cultivation at least since the 18th century, and until the 1930's it had been a regular export fruit (Christodoulou 1959, 175).
There is a view that fruits like pears, apples, cherries and plums appeared in Cyprus during the period of Frankish rule, and because of the climate and suitable soils the island produced a great variety of them (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 120).
The prickly pear, which grew in large quantities, is mentioned in the 19th century as a cooling and wholesome fruit, much eaten by the lower classes.
Apples and pears were less abundant and of inferior quality; peaches were not uncommon but were hard and only fit for cooking (Consular report for the year 1863, in Papadopoullos 1980,84).

Bananas are mentioned by Cotovicus in 1598, as very sweet and of exquisite taste but harmful to the stomach so that only people of the poorest class used them for food. "To preserve them for any time", he says, "they must be picked unripe, and buried in the sand; then they are hung up in bedrooms, or exposed to the sun and they ripen..." (Cobham 1908, 189).
Although banana trees have been cultivated in Cyprus since at least Mediaeval times, they were not a commonly known fruit, but rather a curiosity. By the mid-20th century Cyprus-grown bananas were in good demand and their cultivation is expanding (Christodoulou 1959, 173).

Fruits like apples and apricots, must have been sun-dried, as we know was the case with figs and grapes. This process, still widely practised on the island, makes it possible to better preserve these products, which are high in calories, and consume them in winter. Dried figs from Cyprus helped to relieve great famine in the time of Claudius Caesar, and in Pliny's days vinegar was said to have been manufactured from Cypriot figs (Christodoulou 1959, 178).
We have no information, however, whether figs were used in earlier times to make "Sykopittes", fig pies made of the pulp of figs, flavoured with cumin and rosewater, as they are still prepared in some villages (e.g. Phikardou).
Nuts and almonds were also very common and usually accompany "zivania". The fruit of walnuts is often used green and tender for preserves, while a fine sweetmeat is made from almonds, sugar and rosewater.
Cyprus has been very well supplied with legumes and other vegetables which formed part of the basic foodstuffs of the population. Principal vegetables growing on the island are

pumpkins, cucumbers, lettuces, tomatoes, the aubergine (or black egg-plant), cabbages, cauliflower, spinach, celery, broad-beans, French-beans, lentils, onions, garlic, the "hibiscus esculentus" colocassia and potatos (Consular report of 1863, in Papadopoullos 1980, 84).
Most of these vegetables are mentioned in accounts and some of them, like onions, cauliflower and colocassia, or Egyptian bean, are especially praised by the travellers (e.g. Pesaro (1563), Porcacchi (1585), Cotovicus (1598), Constantius (1766), in Cobham 1908, 75, 166, 310, respectively). Cypriot onions were already mentioned in Roman times by Lucian and Pliny (see references in Michaelides, forthcoming), and Elias of Pesaro in the 16th century, considers Cypriot onions and leeks finer than those grown in Italy.
As for Colocassia antiquorum, a tuber used for food, it still makes a delicious traditional dish. "Colocassi" was known in Cyprus since the Frankish period and, according to a tradition, it was served in the wedding feast of Richard the Lionheart (1191)*.
As mentioned by Lusignan (Lusignan 1580, 224), it was eaten in various ways: in soup, cooked or as salad. The small bulbs can also be fried in olive-oil and then seasoned with crushed coriander seeds and red wine or lemon.
"Colocassi" is traditionally cooked with celery and pork meat, as also the artichokes, especially the small wild ones (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 125-126).
"Colocassi" usually substituted for the potato, the cultivation of which was very small but rapidly expanding at the beginning of British administration (Christodoulou 1959, 150. Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter mentions that the potato was introduced to Cyprus about the middle of the last century by the Italian estate owner Balthazar Mattei (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 125).
Cyprus is considered to be the mother country of the cauliflower which spread from the island to Europe around 1600, via Genoa (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 127, Lusignan 1580, 224). It was eaten as a boiled salad, or cooked in various ways; it was also prepared with dough and sinapis to be consumed during Lent.

* The feast held to celebrate the wedding of King Richard I (Richard Coeur de Lion) with princess Berengaria on the 12th May 1191, in Cyprus, is described by G. Jeffery:
"Preparations for a great feast had of course been made in such a way as to provide for the entertainment of the whole body of the Crusaders, and for a great many invited guests as well. A large number of ovens and kitchens had been constructed in the town, and all who could be pressed into the

service as cooks were busy with the supplies of food which had been brought into Amathus from all parts of the island. Goatskins filled with wine were being unloaded off donkey-back, sheep and lambs were being slaughtered, bread was being baked, and huge quantities of wild turnips, (calocass) and other more or less wild roots such as seem to have constituted a great part of the mediaeval cuisine were being collected into heaps" (Jeffery 1926, 107).

Clarke (1801) refers to many different varieties of the gourd or pumpkin, used in Cyprus for vegetables at table. "The young fruit is boiled", he tells us, "after being stuffed with rice. We found it refreshing and pleasant, partaking at the same time the flavour of asparagus and artichoke" (Cobham 1908, 379-380). Gourds, as well as aubergines, tomatoes, peppers, even onions, are still being stuffed with rice or with rice and minced meat. It is also worthmentioning that wild asparagus, fried with eggs, is till in the present-day a fine meze.
A variety of mushrooms were found wild in nature and were used for food. Some of great size were roasted on skewers like meat (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 131).
Carrots, onions, cabbage, were eaten raw (Salvator 1983, 27).

The caper, mentioned by Galen as a bushy plant which grows in abundance in Cyprus, is similarly described as a luxuriantly growing bush by Dr Hume in the beginning of the 19th century (Cobham 1908, 341). In Cyprus, not only the seed-pods and the buds, but also the shoots of the caper are still being preserved in vinegar and eaten as such or with fresh salad.

Fish was not a common food and it was almost unknown among those who lived far from the coast. It is occasionally mentioned, however, in the 18th and 19th century sources. According to Drummond in 1750, in a little harbour near the convent of Sancta Nappa, the poor people employed themselves in fishing with boats of a very particular texture, consisting of a few sticks bound together, with some very small oars laid in the hollow, where the fisherman sat managing his tackle and steering his craft with a paddle (Cobham 1908, 302). In 1815, Turner was offered by the English consular agent for Paphos, a supper of delicious fish in Yeroskipou, and the same traveller dined at Larnaca on some salt fish and some delicious small artichokes (Cobham 1908, 440, 427). The shores of Cyprus received a great number of Mediterranean fish, but, as it is mentioned in the consular report of 1859, although fish were abundant, there were few fishermen, and naval construction

was almost unknown (Cobham 1908, 38, 44).
Fish like sardines and anguilles, mainly salted fish, were imported from Turkey, Austria, Germany, France, England, and Greece for local consumption (see 19th century consular reports in Papadopoullos 1980, 43, 11-12, 86, 107, 118, 125,135,167-168, 171, 181-182, 185-186, 191,201-202,207-208, 217-218,221-222, 235-236, 239-240, 277, 283, 433-434, 437-438, 443-444, 445-446, 447-448).
Fish farming was practised in antiquity. Rock-cut fish tanks communicating with each other and with the sea were found in Lambusa (Michaelides, forthcoming). In 1735, the Russian monk Vasili Barsky, noticed in a Cypriot monastery a stone built tank, which was used as a fishery with water running from an outside source (Pavlides 1994, 693).
Cyprus is reported as deficient in river fish, and Sibthorp in 1787, found that the only inhabitant of the rivulets was the eel (Cobham 1908, 334). Eels were caught with wooden tongs, fitted with nails (Such an eel-catcher is exhibited in the Yeroskipou Folk Art Museum). According to Samuel Baker, who visited Cyprus in 1879, all fish that came to the net, little and big, good and bad, fetched the same price (Baker 1879, 424).
Fish were roasted, fried, boiled, marinaded, cooked in an earthen pot with oil and onions, or baked in the oven with tomatoes, onions and parsley (Xioutas 1993,114-116).

Small shellfish, like limpets, were found in abundance and, among others, the common St James scallop is a delicious traditional delight, as is also octopus, although these are not specifically mentioned in 18th/19th century sources. A special basketry device, used in the recent past for catching octopus, is indirect evidence for their being cooked and eaten.
However, it was mainly land snails which were traditionally eaten, cooked in various ways e.g. with tomatoes and rice, or roasted on skewers (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 143, Evangelatou 47-48).

Hunting was delightful all over the island, as game was abundant. Among birds hunted for food, the most common were francolins, red-legged partridges, quail, woodcocks, snipes, thrushes, and every kind of waterfowl (Heyman (early 18th century), Kinneir (1814), Turner (1815), in Cobham 1908, 247-248, 414, 445, respectively). There were also wood-pigeons, pheasant, duck and geese.
Most travellers were impressed by the large number of the tiny vine-birds, the "beccafici", called in Greek "sycalidia" or "ambelopoulia", which were caught in such abundance that besides the numbers consumed on the island itself, thousands

were exported. These birds, which are described as delicious on the spot, were extremely fat and plump, especially during the vintage when they fed on grape stones and mastic seed. During the period of Venetian rule in Cyprus, as well as later, infinite numbers of them were preserved in jars and sent for sale to Venice, "making a dainty dish greatly in request with princes and lords throughout Italy" (Locke (1553), Dandini (1596), Cotovicus (1598), Della Valle (1625), in Cobham 1908, 72, 184, 200, 213, respectively). As Mariti informs us, in the 18th century the sale of these little birds was in the hands of the Europeans at Larnaca, who received commissions from England, Holland, France, and some parts of the Turkish dominions from correspondents who desired them for their own use.Every year 400 little barrels were exported, some containing 200, others 400 birds. The largest catches were made near Santa Napa. Some beccafici were sold fresh, but most of them had the head and feet cut off, were scalded, and then put into vinegar with savoury herbs. Thus prepared, they could be kept for a year and were sold at the same price as the fresh birds. The way they were prepared for the table, according to Mariti's account, was to cut them in two, and put them on the gridiron with bread crumbs and a little parsley which gave them an excellent flavour (Mariti 1971, 13-14). Heyman, who visited Cyprus at the beginning of the 18th century, mentions another manner of dressing beccafici with Cyprus wine, and assures us that "few things can better please a dainty palate" (Cobham 1908, 247).
"Ambelopoulia" (vine-birds) have become a traditional exceptional dish in Cyprus and, despite their high price and the protest of the environmentalists, they are still eaten, preferably served with crushed wheat ("pourgouri") cooked in their broth, or pickled in vinegar (Evangelatou, 138).

Apart from birds, there are few wild beasts or game, other than wild goats, and hares. The boar used to be abundant in earlier days on the island and was prized for its meat. It was hunted in the forests of Paphos, as old people still remember, but it has recently disappeared (Michaelides, forthcoming). The moufflon, which is still living in the wild on Cyprus, was widely hunted for its meat until it was protected by law in 1938. According to Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter, the meat of the moufflon is so delicious that even as late as the middle of the 19th century it was not missing from any big meal. During the period of British administration, the hunting of moufflon was allowed after special permission costing 10 shillings was granted, and one was allowed to kill only one animal during the hunting season. This measure was taken in order to prevent the extinction of this precious animal, because there were very few left in 1878 when the British arrived in Cyprus

(Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 138).
A favourable game animal of both ancient and modern Cypriots is the hare. It is mentioned as game by earlier travellers, and Samuel Baker in 1879 confesses that he never tasted any game so delicious as the Cyprian hare. "The flesh is exceedingly rich", he says, "and possesses a particularly gamey flavour, owing to the aromatic food upon which they live" (Baker 1879, 121).

Much more important to the diet were the domestic birds, primarily fowls and pigeons. Geese, duck and turkeys were also bred (Kyprianos 1788, 549; see also Sibthorp (1787), and Kinneir (1814), in Cobham 1908, 333, and 414, respectively). Even in the second half of the 20th century, most families, especially in the rural areas, used to keep fowls, sometimes in large numbers; in villages they still keep a few hen and a cock. Among several varieties, the black breed of fowls has proved the hardiest and the best layer of eggs. Probably this is not irrelevant to the old belief that the black hen brought good luck. The demand for meat and eggs, with the rise of the standard of living and influx of military personnel and tourists, gave an impetus to poultry -keeping, and in the 1950's poultry farms started, and chicks were produced with large incubators (Christodoulou 1959, 195).
In earlier days, however, fowls were not eaten very often. They were reserved for Sundays or feasts, or were cooked when a member of the family was ill or when a guest arrived. Such instances are mentioned by travellers. Turner(1815) gives a vivid description of a supper in the cottage of a peasant at the village of Mazoto: "We got a good supper of fowls, which, as usual with us, were killed, picked, cooked and eaten in twenty minutes..." (Cobham 1908, 445, 438).
Chicken and pigeons were traditionally more often boiled than roasted, and home made pastas were cooked in the broth (Ionas 1994, 441).

Animal meat was provided by pigs, sheep and goats. As for cattle, we are informed by Archimandrite Kyprianos and foreign travellers that Cypriots did not eat the flesh of oxen, or calves, nor even drank cow's milk (Kyprianos 1788, 547). These animals were so important in agriculture that in poor areas reople lived with them in the single room of their house, and during the period of ploughing, these animals were given extra food during the night. As Pococke noticed in 1738: "They plough with their cows, which they do not milk, looking on it as cruel to milk and work the same beast; but perhaps they may rather have regard to the young that are to be nourished by them" (Cobham 1908, 267). Drummond (1750) gives another reason for this:"there is no such thing as cow's milk to be had on

the island" he says "because there is no grass during the summer" (Cobham 1908,284).
Even by the turn into the 20th century, it was considered, according to Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter's information, a great sin to eat beef or drink cow's milk. She notices, however, that the ban had started to change under the influence of the British and so, when an ox had to be slaughtered, its meat was no longer thrown to the dogs, but was given to some more enlightened shepherds who would eat beef (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 22).
In the 1930's, there were well equipped dairies in the chief town, which furnished good supplies of cows' milk (Nutrition in the Colonial Empire, 1939, Cyprus, 1).
Beef-eating was spreading by the mid-20th century, and, because the price of the meat was high, bullock-fattening was taken up by some villages (Christodoulou 1959, 183).

Pigs were reared in Cyprus by the Greeks, as the Turks avoided pork on religious grounds. By the 18th century, according to Pococke (1738), Cypriots supplied Christians in all parts with excellent hams, which they cured in a particular manner by salting them, pouring the rich wine on them, and after having pressed them very dry, they hung them up" (Cobham 1908, 267).
Pigs were the general scavengers in the Cypriot villages, and their meat was much esteemed during the winter months. Baker tells us that in the monasteries, which were occasionally snowed under and excluded from communication, a winter supply of pork was laid up during the autumn. He gives an interesting detailed description of the manner in which the pigs and the fattest goats were killed and preserved for eating: "Without removing a bone, the animal is split from the neck along the abdomen throughout, and it is laid completely open like a smoked haddock. Every joint is most carefully dislocated, even to the shoulder-blade bones, and remains in its place. The flesh is neatly detached from every bone, and in this form the carcase is salted, and stretched out in the sun to dry.When prepared it resemples a shield, as it remains perfectly flat, the back presenting a smooth surface, while the inside represents a beautiful specimen of comparative anatomy..." (Baker 1879, 429).
In the 20th century the pig continued to be the most useful animal for poor families, and as late as 1946, there was one pig per Greek rural household. Even in the 1950's preserved pork was nearly the only meat consumed by peasant families. Some parts of the Troodos Massif have produced hams for many centuries and there are still specialists in this region. Apart from the meat, the lard of the pig was widely used, especially in areas where olive oil is scarce (Christodoulou 1959, 193-194). It was used in cooking, even in making

traditional sweetmeats. Elderly people remember that in their childhood they used to eat pig's lard spread on bread, as there was no butter.

Sheep and goats provided both meat and milk. The fat-tailed sheep of Cyprus, common also in Turkey and the Levant, impressed travellers. A characteristic description is given by Cotovicus (1598): "There are sheep of enormous bulk and wonderfully fat, with tails of a cubic's length and so broad and thick that they not only cover the hinder parts of the animal, but often weigh over 12 pounds" (Cobham 1908, 200).
By the beginning of the 20th century, Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter noticed that the fat of these tails was delicious, and it was used in cooking as a substitute for butter (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 133).
Meat was not a common dish; even as late as the 1950's there was no meat for sale except on festive occasions, and most meat was consumed in the towns (Christodoulou 1959, 189).
Tethered goats have been kept for centuries, especially in mountain areas supplementing the poor diet with meat and mainly with milk. Milk, however, was seldom drunk as most of it was turned into cheese. The Cypriot cheese was renowned overseas at least since Roman times (There is a literary reference by the 2nd century author Lucian: Michaelides, forthcoming). In the early 18th century Heyman mentions native cheeses in Cyprus made of goat's milk, which after being laid in oil, were in great request all over the Levant, and more information is given by Pococke in 1738: "They make cheese of goats' milk, which is famous all over the Levant, and is the only good cheese to be met with in these parts; they are small and thick, much in the shape of the ancient weights, and are kept in oil, otherwise when they are new they would breed a worm, and when old soon grow dry" (Cobham 1908, 247, 267). The above described is the "halloumi", the exclusively Cypriot cheese, which was traditionally produced at home by the women folk, mostly for family use, and is still domesticallly made in many villages. "Halloumi" and other variations of native cheese, as well as sour milk ("yoghourt"), are described also by Archimandrite Kyprianos (Kyprianos 1788, 547). "Yoghourt" was produced and consumed in abundance, as Cypriots lived mainly on bread, vegetables, anddairy products (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 153).
Cheese manufacture has been a family affair and only in the 20th century also an industrial enterprise. Monasteries have always been noted for good cheeses, and pieces of "halloumi" are recorded among other foodstuffs in their property.
Cheese -making factories date from World War I.
In the 1930's country districts relied entirely on the milk of sheep and goats, most of which was converted into cheese or

into "yoghourt". Condensed milk was imported to the annual value of about 6,000 sterlin (Nutrition in the Colonial Empire, 1939, Cyprus, 1). The 1946 census figures suggested that nearly half the milk went into the production of "halloumi", and in late 1950's half the production was exported (Christodoulou 1959, 192-193).
Early travellers had the opportunity to taste milk and cheese, which often were offered for dinner:
Drummond (1750) complained that frequently the milk which was brought for their tea was so excessively salty that they could not use it with any degree of pleasure (Cobham 1908, 284).
Ali Bey (1806) had a delicious supper of cheese, cream and the like, in a village near Limassol (Cobham 1908, 409).
Turner (1815) got some delicious milk, warm from the goat, in the village of Athienou. The same traveller mentions several dinners in the countryside of Cyprus: In the house of a Musulman peasant he was offered some eggs which, with bread and cheese and wine, made a good dinner. In the mountains he had a bread and cheese dinner, in Paphos a bad dinner consisting of onions and cheese, and in Athienou he dined on some eggs (Cobham 1908, 430, 445, 441, 436).

Such references give us some idea about the local food habits of the time and also about the hospitality and the social behaviour of the people in relation to food.

Clarke (1801) was hosted by the old parents of his mule-drivers in Athienou: "They made us welcome to their homely supper", he writes, " by placing two planks across a couple of benches and setting thereon boiled pumpkins, eggs, and some wine of the island in a hollow gourd..." (Cobham 1908, 385).

About a century later, Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter described in detail her reception in the house of Hadjipetros, the richest inhabitant of a village in Messaoria. Travelling with her husband, they lost their way and arrived unexpectedly in the middle of a winter night. The family woke up to entertain the guests. First they offered them fruits preserved in syrup, water, brandy, turkish coffee and the two last biscuits of the house. The family had just finished the bread, so the older daughter of the house was ordered to grind corn with the hand-mill for baking bread, and the son was sent to the priest's house to bring a gourd of the best wine, a couple of sausages and some soft unsalted cheese, called "anari". The youngest girl, eight years old, burnt olive leaves in the incence burner to avert the evil eye.
The best woven tablecloth was taken out of the chest, and before sitting to the table, the guests were poured water from a special jug, in order to wash their hands (a similar custom

is described by Homer in Odyssey, d 52-54, and was a common practice during the Byzantine period). Only the host joined the guests; his wife and the rest of the family were only present to serve the food. (In 1738 Pococke had strongly criticised this "barbarous custom of the Eastern nations of treating their wives as servants: "they wait on them at table and never sit down with them, unless in such families as are civilized by much conversation by the Franks;", Cobham 1908, 268). A hot "trachanas" soup was served first; this consists of dried crushed wheat prepared with milk and salt and is a bit sour in taste. The soup was enriched with pieces of "halloumi" cheese. The main dish included sausages made of pork, which were fried with eggs in olive-oil and pig's fat. Slices of "halloumi" were also fried with them. Upon this, pieces of soft unsalted "anari" cheese sprinkled with honey were served, and finally oranges, almonds, nuts, raisins, and two pomegranates were offered as dessert.

This dinner ended around three o'clock, but on the next morning, before the departure of the guests, the family prepared a rich lunch for them; this included chicken soup, "souvla" (roast meat on skewers), potatoes, and "colocassi". The hosts offered also flowers and fruits for the way and refused to receive any money (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 165-168).

The foods mentioned are still considered as main traditional dishes in Cyprus.

Magda Ohnefalsch-Richter's description recalls similar customary behaviour in official receptions of earlier times.

Drummond (1750) reports that during his visit with the Consul to the Vezir Pasha in Nicosia, they were entertained with coffee, sweetmeats and sherbet, and lastly with perfumes (Cobham 1908, 285). Similarly, a few years later, in 1787, when Sibthorp and his company visited the Archbishop, they were offered pipes and entertained with coffee, liqueurs and perfumes (Cobham 1908, 331).

In 1827, foreign visitors to the house of the Khojabashi at Larnaca, were regaled with pipes and coffee, after which they were each presented with conserves in little filigree cups of silver; then followed excellent sherbet with napkins; and then they were sprinkled with rosewater, and perfumed with incense contained in filigree silver censers (Frankland in Cobham 1908, 457).

The general entertainment of visitors by Greeks and Turks in Nicosia is described in 1873 by Salvator: "Visitors always receive jam made of melons, cherries, quince, apricots, or rose-leaves. With this sweet stuff, called "Tatli" in Turkish, "Glikon" in Greek, the servants bring little baskets of silverwire with small ornamental spoons...After that comes the coffee, as a sort of invitation to leave, especially with the

Turks... After the coffee, cigarettes are usually offered..." (Salvator 1983, 60).
The above described "glikon" is still prepared by housewives from different kinds of fruit and such preserves are traditionally offered to guests with coffee to the present day.

Rich people, both Moslems and Christians, undoubtedly had a most refined and sophisticated diet. Unfortunately we do not have sufficient information about it. The dinner served after the Turkish fashion at the Governor's palace, can be regarded as the most extreme case of luxury. Sibthorp (1787), who describes the dinner, had counted thirty-six well dressed dishes, when the dragoman made an apology for the badness of the dinner, because he had not assistance enough to prepare it. It was enough, however, to give to the traveller a favourable idea of the Turkish cooking and the Governor's hospitality (Cobham 1908, 329).

The dragoman (Interpreter of the Serai), who was a Christian official appointed by the Porte, must have also enjoyed a luxurious diet. Indirect evidence to this effect is the variety of sets of plates and dishes, glasses, silver spoons, forks and knives (among others, a special set for the dessert), and other accessories which are recorded in the list of the Dragoman's property and presuppose a variety of repasts. (this manuscript is being prepared for publication by the author).
Similar information is derived from the lists of property of deceased merchants and technicians, especially the rich merchants who lived in Larnaca. Among their personal belongings are included a variety of cooking vessels and other utensils which point to refined food habits. Some worth mentioning are skewers for roasting meat, grills ("gradella"), sets of casseroles, chinese cups made of faience, pots for mustard, spoons for serving punch, glasses for liqueurs ("rosolia"), etc. (these lists of property are included in the unpublished Codex of properties of the Archbishopric of Cyprus and of the Bishopric of Kition; they are currently being studied by the author. The list of property of the merchant Evangelis Peristianos (1787) in Larnaca, is forthcoming).

The number of people who could afford a rich diet, was at that time very restricted and such cases cannot be regarded as representing traditional forms of nutrition; they were exceptions.

The average Cypriot had to survive on a bare minimum and exploit his natural environment to the maximum in order to

satisfy the basic needs of his family. This kind of subsistence economy survived in some areas of Cyprus until the mid-20th century.
According to Surridge's survey of the rural life in Cyprus in 1929, peasants considered that 9 sheep or goats and one pig were sufficient to provide a family with milk, cheese and meat (Surridge 1930, 62).
Most of the foodstuffs were produced by the family or were found in nature. Basic foodstuffs like cereals, legumes, olive oil and olives, onions, dried meat and fruits, cheese and "trachanas", bee or carob honey and wine, had to be stored for at least one year. The peasant houses, therefore, served mainly as storage space for the provisions for the family and for animal feed. Until the middle of the 20th century, about 50% of the rural houses consisted of a single room where people lived with the oxen over the winter and which also served as the store-room for all the goods. Piles of onions and potatoes and earthen jars were part of the furniture and it was the fire place which was used for cooking (Ionas 1994, 440-442, Surridge 1930, 12).
In the monasteries there were special store-houses where all the above mentioned foodstuffs were stored. Their contents during the 18th century are recorded together with their other property in an unpublished Codex of the Archbishopric.

Generally, the diet of the people in Cyprus was simple and poor, until the mid-20th century.
In 1879 Samuel Baker observed that the common and poor quality of food of the lower classes and especially of the agricultural population, must have induced a want of stamina which resulted in the inability to resist the fever and chronic diseases of the spleen (Baker 1879, 429).
According to the First Report of the Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire, presented to Parliament in 1939, quantitative deficiencies in the food of children of the poorer classes had long been recognised to exist. A considerable number of the rural population were definitely underfed and thus liable to tuberculosis, colds, infectious diseases and epidemic ophthalmia. The main cause of dietary deficiency, both in town and country, was poverty.
The results of this study conform with oral information by people who spent their childhood in the 1920's and 1930's. They remember that their food consisted of bread, olives, legumes, vegetables, milk, with eggs and meat occasionally; but all these were in restricted quantities; even olives were counted.
Bearing these facts in mind, we can understand why those children - and the adults as well - eagerly awaited Sundays and religious feasts; these days not only meant rest and play,

and better clothes, but mainly good food.
It is not by chance that the best traditional Cypriot dishes are connected with popular religious feasts and with specific traditional customs.

Religious beliefs had a serious effect on food habits. Christmas and Easter were preceded by a period of fasting which lasted 40 and 50 days, respectively. To these we must add another fifteen days in August, before the Dormition of the Virgin Mary on August 15.
The words of Elias of Pesaro , who visited Cyprus in 1663, are valid to the present day for many people: "The Greeks", he says, "keep a Lent three times a year, abstaining from all animal products, even from fish and eggs" (Cobham 1908, 75). Ali Bey (1806) confirms that people in Cyprus observed their Lent so strictly that they had scruples even about the use of oil, so that during this season their food was reduced to bread and a few olives (Cobham 1908,397). Turner (1815) noticed also that many professed Moslems were in secret Greeks, and observed all the numerous fasts of the Orthodox Church; they also used to drink wine and eat pork, a thing unheard of in Turkey (Cobham 1908, 449).
Christmas is the main winter religious feast which is accompanied with many food preparations.
Rural households used to buy a piglet at a fair and, after fattening it for a year, they slaughtered it at Christmas time. Part of the meat and the liver were roasted and consumed during the Christmas feasts, but most of it was used for making sausages, smoked ham, etc. The outer skin with the fat underneath was cut in pieces, salted, and put in dry wine for a few days and then seasoned with spices and dried in the sun. Pieces of fried meat, which was first soaked in wine, were preserved in jars filled with pig's fat. Fat was used for cooking and for a variety of sweetmeats. In this way they preserved meat for the whole year (Kyprianou 1970, 14, 18).
For the sausages, which are still home made in many villages, the intestines are washed well, rubbed with lemon, and soaked in wine with small pieces of fat and meat, for at least a week, and pepper and salt will be added. The head and the trotters of the pig are used for making "zelatina (brawn). For this, pieces of meat and fat are marinaded in vinegar for two days before being rinsed and boiled. Once the meat is well cooked, it is turned out into pots with its liquid, to which lemon, pepper corns, and aromatic leaves (rosemary) are added. The liquid turns into jelly (Paraskevopoulou 1982, 16).
Special bread and pastries covered with sesame seeds were prepared for Christmas. The so-called "gennopitta" was made on Christmas and was cut on the first day of the year (Evangelatou 178-179). It was later substituted by

"Vasilopitta" (St Basil's bread), which seems to have been an old custom, as it is described by Salvator in 1873: "Another curious custom of the Greeks, to which they cling tenaciously, is to bake a loaf of bread about new year with a gold coin inside, and to divide it into as many pieces as there are members of the family. The one who finds the coin is supposed to be happy all through the next year. This bread is called Vasilobita..." (Salvator 1983, 60).
The traditional Christmas dish, eaten when returning from morning church, is, to the present day, the "Avgolemoni", a soup of chicken broth and rice, to which is added eggs and lemon juice. On this day the family eats all sorts of pork, a boiled chicken or a stuffed turkey, and drinks red wine. They also used to eat some of the "Vassilouthkia", a type of cake made of boiled corn mixed with pomegranate seeds, almonds and aromatic seeds (Paraskevopoulou 1982, 22).
On the eve of Epiphany, the housewives used to make with kneaded dough the "xerotiana" special pancakes; some of them were thrown on the roof, together with sausages, for the "Kalikandjari" to eat and leave the house unharmed (the "Kalikandjari" were believed to be children who died unbaptised and were free to wander on earth for 12 days between Christmas and the Epiphany) (Papacharalambous 1965, 170-172).

The Sunday of the first Carnival is called "Kreatini" (of meat), because this is the last day when the Church allows the eating of meat. Accordingly, the second week is called "Tyrini" (cheese week), because during it people may it cheese and all things made of milk. The Thursday of the Carnival week is called "Tsiknopefti" from the smell ("tsikna") of the fried meat and liver. On this and the days which follow until Sunday, people eat all sorts of fried or cooked meats. On the last Sunday of Carnival, called "Sicosses", there are so many dishes that, according to a Cypriot proverb, "At Carnival time even the dogs overeat". Traditional food eaten on this day used to be: ravioli with cheese, pork galantine, macaroni cooked in chicken stock, boiled chicken, pork, lamb, and slices of very thin pastry filled with cream, called "tsippopittes".
On Clean Monday, the first day of fasting, people eat vegetables, fruits, olives, special bread, and seafood. It is still a tradition to take food and go out to the country, to "cut off the nose of Lent". On the fast of Clean Monday, and during the first week of Lent, it is also traditional to serve "kolokopittes"; these are made of pastry stuffed with the flesh of gourd and semolina, to which is added olive oil, pepper and raisins (Paraskevopoulou 1982, 33-41).

Easter is the great spring religious feast which is connected with special food habits. On Holy Saturday the housewives used to prepare the Easter bread and many kinds of cakes and dye the Easter eggs with madder roots. They also made the "avgotes", a sort of pastry pouch in which they put red eggs. The Easter specialty par excellence, still prepared in all parts of Cyprus, is the "flaouna", the name of which is supposed to be connected with the french word flan , in english flawn (Erotokritos 1989, 302). This is a kind of cake made of pastry, stuffed with grated cheese mixed with eggs, raisins, mint, mahlep and mastic. People who could afford it, also added milk. Special cheeses were produced for the "flaounes" by the flock-owners, and those of Akanthou and Paphos have been famous for centuries. "Flaounes" were sprinkled with sesame and baked in the oven. They were considered a luxury and according to an 18th century manuscript, the Archbishop ordered the Christians to avoid serving them. To the present day the "flaouna" cheese is very expensive. The same pastry was used, especially in the district of Paphos, for making "paskes", which were filled with fried pieces of pork or lamb's meat and cheese (Kyprianou 1970, 30, Pharmakides 1910-1911, 207, Paraskevopoulou 1982, 49, 53, and oral information).
On the eve of Easter, after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, people rushed to their houses to enjoy a rich dinner after the long fast. Chicken soup and lamb's meat were served, as well as "avgotes" , the Easter bread and other pastries made in the shape of serpents, birds, humans,etc. (Ohnefalsch-Richter 1913, 78).
On Easter day, all families, however poor they might be, had meat on the table.

The traditional wedding in Cyprus lasted a week and was a big event to which the whole village as well as friends and relatives from other places were invited; therefore, much and good food had to be prepared. The Thursday and Friday before the wedding were devoted to baking different kinds of bread which were needed: special bread to be used for the holy communion, "glystarkes" (a coil of dough formed into a circle with criss-crossed strips in the middle), small rusks - in some villages containing coins - to be thrown over the couple during the Isaiah dance, breads in symbolic shapes of crosses, snakes, baskets, etc. used for decoration, and other breads for consumption during the wedding feast. In earlier times a special loaf of bread made as two halves united - a symbol of the union of marriage - sprinkled with sesame, was given to each house as an invitation (Egoumenidou, "The traditional wedding in Cyprus", forthcoming).
A typical traditional food served in weddings was called

"ressi" and was prepared with crushed wheat cooked with pieces of boiled meat until it became a pulp. "Ressi" was also cooked by Moslems in Cyprus for weddings, for the Bairam, and in periods of drought; it was blessed by the Hodja and offered to all poor people regardless of their religion (Pharmakides 1910-1911, 207).
The main wedding dish was meat accompanied by cheese , olives, wedding breads, and much wine. In some villages thin pierced macaroni were made of dough, which was coiled around rushes. Traditional dishes, which are still cooked in weddings, are meat and potatoes roasted in ovens, baked macaroni, stuffed vine leaves, and meatballs. In earlier days usually "colocassi" cooked in cauldrons alone or with meat, was served.
At the wedding table the bride and groom were offered honey and almonds or nuts in order to have a sweet life, and on Monday morning a pair of boiled pigeons, to symbolise that they should love each other as pigeons do. In such celebrations food acquires a symbolic meaning and function. On this day the best men and relatives used to bring chicken, meat and other foodstuffs to be cooked for the night's feast. The bride welcomed the guests sprinkling them with rosewater and offered them sweets and half a "glystarka", or in other places homemade sweets and "zivania" (Cyprus eau de vie).
The conclusion of the traditional wedding was the "antigamos", a feast organized on the Sunday after the wedding in the house of the newly married couple; the traditional menu with "ressi" and /or baked meat, chicken, etc. was repeated, and on Monday a sweet with honey and nuts, called "daktyla" (fingers) was served to all those who had helped. The 20th century special sweet offered in weddings, is the "loukoumi", made of pistachio-nuts and covered with almond paste and sugar.
People did not forget their dead. A special dish "kollyfa" was customarily prepared to commemorate them; it was made of boiled wheat garnished with almonds, pomegranate seeds, raisins and sesame. A similar dish is described by Salvator in 1873, in Nicosia, referring to the commemoration of the Greeks' dead: "...a cake of wheat, saffron, almonds, raisins and other spices is baked, as also a bread seasoned with sesame-seed, into which they stick a yellow wax candle". He also informs us that at Turkish funerals "Halava" was prepared in great quantities, which, three days afterwards, was offered in front of the gates of the mosque to all passers-by (Salvator 1983, 63).

Cyprus cookery is extremely rich in its variety. Throughout the centuries it absorbed several influences from both East and West. During the period of Ottoman rule, Cyprus came in closer contact with the oriental kitchen. Traditional Oriental

food and especially sweetmeats were also brought by Armenians who came from Asia Minor to Cyprus as refugees between 1895 and 1922.
It is worth noticing that the Turkish community in Cyprus has most dishes in common with the Greek Cypriots. Generally speaking, the Turkish Cypriots eat a good deal of "yoghourt" and other milk products as well as rice ("pilav"). In 1787 Sibthorp described a repast of "yaourt and ricemilk" offered to him by the Aga of the village of Polis in Paphos (Cobham 1908,332).
Some Turkish dishes are similar but not identical with those of the Greek. In weddings and during the first Bayram Turkish Cypriots cook the lamb's meat with chick-peas and onions and serve it with sweet "pilav" and with "pilav" cooked with chick-peas. A special dish made by Turkish Cypriots, is the "molohiya", known also in Egypt; it is prepared with the dried leaves of ..., cooked with meat, onions, green peppers and lemon juice.

Until the middle of the 20th century and even later, traditional forms of nutrition remained essentially unaltered. As late as 1939, the British Commition on Nutrition reported that "The Cypriot is tenacious of his food habits and is suspicious of change".
Rapid economic development and the rise in the standard of living which Cyprus experienced after World War II, and especially since her independence in 1960, brought about profound changes in the general way of life. Among other things, food habits were differentiated and the traditional kitchen was modified; it has been enriched with new recipies, mostly European, and, more recently, Levantine and Chinese, but at the same time many old traditional dishes have been abandoned. Rapid change is a typical feature of our modern consumer society, and many cultural aspects which remained unchanged for centuries are now in danger of disappearing. Therefore, there is an urgent need to record systematically the local traditional food with all its regional variations and communal differantiations, and to try to preserve it as a valuable part of the island's cultural heritage.

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The information on Turkish-Cypriot food I owe to the Turkish-Cypriot friends Tulin and Oya....