

THE KEY TO GREEK CUISINE

From her home on Kea, celebrated cookbook author Aglaia Kremezi shares her passion for Greek food with the world.

BY KRISTIN BAIRD RATTINI



DELICIOUS IDEAS

KEA, GREECE

EVER SINCE HER inaugural cookbook, *The Foods of Greece*, won the Julia Child First Book Award in 1993, Aglaia Kremezi has been the international voice of authority on Greek cooking. She has taught at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in California and has written for *Bon Appetit* and *Gourmet*. She has befriended such culinary luminaries as Chez

Panisse owner Alice Waters (who praised Kremezi's most recent cookbook, *Mediterranean Vegetarian Feasts*) and José Andrés, whom she advises on Zaytinya, his lauded Mediterranean restaurant in Washington, D.C. (and soon to open in New York City). ¶ Originally an editor for Greek lifestyle magazines, Kremezi pivoted to a full-time

food focus after realizing she found greater joy from the weekly dinner parties she hosted after work. She finds inspiration from what's fresh at the market and from all the *ya-yias* ("grandmothers") whose kitchens she has visited on research trips across the Greek islands. ¶ She describes her recipes as simple, so everyone can follow. But her books are far more than instruction manuals. "I tell stories," Kremezi says. "Cooking is not just about recipes; it's about culture and traditions." ¶ She shares those stories with visitors to Kea through her Kea Artisanal week-long cooking vacations as well as one-day outings, perfectly suited for cruisers. ¶ "My favorite part of Kea is the smells," she says. "As the ferry approaches the island, you have this pure air, this lightness of air, scented with savory and wild thyme. It's incredible."

AGLAIA'S A-LIST ON KEA

- **TSOURTIS BAKERY** (Ioulis and Hora): Many people love his orange cookies, but my favorites are the ones with grape molasses.
- **PIAZZA** (Ioulis and Hora): Try *paspalas*, a local specialty with eggs and the island's version of pork confit, as well as *loza*, a wine-macerated, smoke-cured pork tenderloin.
- **TYRAKEION** (Ioulis): They make ice creams and cheeses from their own cow and goat milk.
- **ARISTAIOS** (Mylopotamos): Local specialties include spoon sweets (fruit preserves).

- **Which ingredients are essential to Greek cooking?** Fresh produce, especially onions, garlic and herbs; olives; feta cheese; and you cannot do without lemons.
- **What is your comfort dish?** I bring home old-fashioned bread from the bakery. I fry an egg in olive oil and eat it with the bread and feta cheese. It is the best. ♡

Aglaia Kremezi calls her island in the Cyclades archipelago "quite unchanged" from the way it looked centuries ago.