

CYPRUS

QUALITY AND TASTE PAR EXCELLENCE

The uncompromised quality of Cyprus food production makes it one of the most successful and sustainable food exporters from the Mediterranean. The country enjoys an unrivalled position geographically, with excellent logistics and a climate, which when teamed with a wealth of experience and a determination to produce the very best from what nature has provided, gives us foods beyond compare.

Following our invitation from the Cyprus High Commission Trade Centre in London, ISN reporter Olivia Tirelli travelled to the

island, to immerse her senses in this extraordinarily varied food manufacturing haven, where products are made to recipes handed down through the ages. Yet in complete contrast to their traditional image, the manufacturing facilities were found to be modern, highly technical installations, where stringent hygiene regulations are met and the highest certification requirements are achieved.

Cyprus produces a variety of top quality, authentic food and drink, including the world renowned Halloumi cheese and Commandaria wine, extra virgin olive oil, pasta, fruit, vegetables and herbs, meat products, frozen ready meals and bakery products.

HALLOUMI

VERSATILITY ON A PLATE

Halloumi cheese has been produced in Cyprus for centuries and is the most unique of the Cypriot delicacies, so that it is registered as a "Cyprus only" product. Many British consumers, will instantly recognise Halloumi, however, there are many still to know the delights of this most versatile cheese. Traditionally made from sheep and / or goat's milk, but also in more modern times a combination including the addition of cow's milk, Halloumi is a semi hard white cheese with a distinctive layered texture and slightly salty flavour. It is stored in its natural juices with brine, and can keep for up to a year if frozen below -18 °C (0 °F). It is often garnished with mint to add to the taste. Traditionally, the mint leaves were used as a preservative, the use serendipitously discovered, when the fresh Halloumi was kept wrapped in mint leaves to retain its freshness and flavour. With an unusually high melting point it can be eaten and enjoyed fresh, fried, grilled, or baked. Whichever the method of cooking, Halloumi retains its shape, with its outside turning a pleasant crispy brown, yet an inside softening but not melting. During her visit Olivia visited a number of companies which produce and export Halloumi and other dairy products:

Vivartia Cyprus Ltd manufactures two types of traditional Halloumi, one made exclusively from 100% fresh sheep and goat's milk and the other containing goat's, sheep and cow's milk. A low fat and catering Halloumi are also made, as well as other dairy products, under their brand name Christis. With an

ultra-modern cheese production unit, Vivartia export successfully to well known supermarkets and quality food outlets, throughout countries such as UK, USA, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, the Middle East and many others, making it a major exporter of Cyprus dairy products.

www.christisdairies.com.cy

Pantziaros Bros also make traditional Halloumi, along with fresh and dry Anari. Popular as it is low in fat, as well as being very tasty, Anari is another delicious fresh cheese from Cyprus. It is made traditionally by adding milk to the whey left after making Halloumi. If not consumed fresh, the cheese is salted and air-dried. The company has a strong established export capability and is expanding its current trade links with Europe and the Middle East. Email: pantziarosbros@cytanet.com.cy

Pittas Dairies Ltd has been producing Halloumi and other authentic Cypriot cheeses and yoghurt since 1939 and now exports to over 40 countries throughout Europe and as far afield as USA, Australia and Japan. Halloumi, Anari, Kefalotyri, and other cheeses are produced, including an award winning Halloumi, flavoured with fresh basil rather than the standard mint, 'Although the cheese is traditional, we put our own modern touch to it, giving the very best in quality and variety, for the supermarkets, retailers and distributors.' said Mr. Yiannos Pittas, Export Director. www.pittas.com



COMMANDARIA

The history of wine making in Cyprus stretches back to ancient times, as recent excavations have proved when archaeologists digging in the village of Pyrgos in Limassol district, revealed that the production of wine dates back some 6000 years. There are now over 40 wineries in Cyprus, producing authentic wines, with recognizably individual characters. The Cypriot wine industry is modern; embracing advances in technology which have revolutionized wine making.

Many of the wines produced are made from grape varieties that are indigenous to Cyprus and have been used for centuries, such as one of the island's most sought after exports, Commandaria. This "flagship" of the Cypriot wine industry is an amber-coloured sweet dessert wine, which has the distinction of being the oldest recorded and named wine in the world, still in production, with a history stretching back millennia.

Commandaria got its name from the Gran Commanderie, an area surrounding Kolossi Castle, which is located west of Limassol. The castle was the Commanderie (headquarters) of the monastic Hospitaller Knights, which undertook both religious duties and the protection and care of travellers. The Hospitallers were connoisseurs of good wine and experts in production techniques, therefore it is not surprising that the Knights of St. John adopted and perfected the production of the sweet Cyprus wine.

In modern times, Commandaria is a product holding a protected designation of origin (PDO) within the European Union, the United States and Canada. Grown and fermented within the confines of the Commandaria region, which now consists of 14 designated villages around Limassol, it is produced exclusively from the indigenous Mavro and Xynisteri grape varieties. The already sweet grapes are harvested and allowed to dry in the sun before pressing. The run off

is collected for fermentation and stored in tanks or in some places traditional earthen jars where it develops into the dark, sweet wine, enjoyed by so many. The addition of wine-origin alcohol brings the product up to a minimum 15% alcohol which by law it is then aged for at least two years in oak barrels (some as many as 10 years).

There are five major producers of Commandaria on the island - **ETKO, KEO, LOEL, SODAP** and **Lambouri Winery**. Four of these were visited by ISN, the first being **ETKO** winery, which was established in 1844, and is the oldest Cypriot winery still in production. They export traditionally made, very fine Commandaria, under the Saint Nicholas and Centurion brands, which possesses the sweetness of honey and a very fine bouquet. www.etkowines.com

SODAP was established in 1947 and their Saint Barnabas Commandaria has a fine aroma, predominantly chocolate and coffee, followed by a hint of fresh mint when tasted. The company owns and operates two wineries, one in Limassol and the other in Paphos. www.sodap.com.cy

KEO, founded in 1927, markets a wide variety of wines, spirits and liqueurs as well as KEO beer. KEO's Saint John Commandaria is produced in the traditional manner and as a reflection of its quality is kept prior to sale for an average of 10 years. Saint John Commandaria has a luscious taste and a powerful bouquet of dried fruit, spices and smoky oak. www.keogroup.com

Although not included in this trip, **LOEL** exports fine wines and spirits including a vintage Commandaria under the brand name Alasia. www.loel.com.cy

Lambouri is the largest luxury boutique winery in Cyprus, with a limited production of 75,000 bottles annually, assuring quality in wines reserved for exclusive outlets. The Lambouri Commandaria Legacy is a vintage wine and aged to perfection. It possesses an intense caramel colour, sweet and full bodied in taste. The 2000 vintage was aged in oak barrels and not released for sale until 2009. www.lambouri.com

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Alion Fruit & Vegetables Exporters has increased its premises to a new state-of-the-art packing house. The new facility is a temperature controlled environment with pre-cooling rooms and new packing technology designed especially for herbs. The company is now exporting more than 3,500 tonnes of herbs and vegetables and its main market lies in the UK. www.alionveg.com

Cyprus Potato Marketing Board is a major exporter of new potatoes, which are all grown in the famous red soil of the island, producing an unparalleled flavour. The company exports a number of potato varieties, collected by hand and all subject to strict quality controls from production through to transportation process. www.cpmb.org.cy

KEAN has a portfolio of 72 top of the scale quality products exported to 32 countries. Their product range includes natural juices and nectars, fruit drinks, ice tea and iced coffee, squashes and cordials, soft drinks, seltzers as well as tomato products. www.kean.com.cy



OTHER PRODUCTS OF GREAT VALUE

Wheat is one of the major agricultural products of Cyprus and pasta products have been part of the Cypriot gastronomy for centuries. **Mitsides** produces flour and pasta since 1932, passing down a culture of excellence through the generations. The company has now expanded its product range to include frozen products, sauces, tomato products and bulgur wheat. www.mitsidesgroup.com



SEKEP produces only the best quality virgin olive oil and exports internationally. Strict quality controls are in place to ensure that the highest quality olives are used in manufacture. Following the introduction of improved processing facilities, SEKEP can produce large volumes of bulk and bottled products. Mr Christos Tsiattalos explained, "we accept nothing less than extra virgin olive oil, which comes from the first pressing, meaning it is the least processed." Email: sekepltd@cytanet.com.cy

Avgoustinos Food Industry supplies Cypriot specialities alongside frozen meals such as pizza, burgers and ravioli in a market leading range of products. This large manufacturer produces high quality ready meals from the best ingredients. www.avgoustinosfoodindustry.com



Zorbas Bakeries supplies high quality bakery products along with a variety of top quality pastries and confectionery. With a fully automated state of the art production facility and a dedication to good quality and hygiene, the company is set to increase their supply to UK and Europe. www.zorbas.com.cy

Paradisiotis has brand new technology and excellent facilities to produce various chicken meat products, ranging from whole chickens to burgers and nuggets. The brand new processing plant handles a high volume of orders with ease and currently exports 40% of its production. www.paradisiotis.com

Realizing the increase in demand for natural products, **Theodorou Salt Industry** established a modern unit for salt flakes production which has expanded through technology advanced solutions. Their range includes table salt and sea salt flakes - completely natural crystals, which retain trace minerals from the sea and are flavoured with the highest grade herbs and spices. The salt is available in plastic containers in practical sizes for consumer use and plastic bags for industrial use. www.sailorsalt.com

For further information on products from Cyprus, please contact the Cyprus High Commission Trade Centre in London, www.cyprustrade.co.uk, www.freshfruitvegetables.com, www.foodstuffcyprus.com, www.winesofcyprus.co.uk.