



Party like it's 2700 B.C.

An archaeologist is resurrecting the cooking of the ancient Minoan civilization from the Greek island of Crete *By John Scott Lewinski*

YOU ENTER A CHAMBER LIT BY THE glow of candles and a hearth in the room's center. Several hand-made earthen pots cook slowly over white, ashen coals. After enjoying a goblet of hearty wine wrought from grapes grown here on Crete, your hosts offer a selection of Minoan dishes representing the height of Bronze Age cuisine: an appetizer of nuts and olives followed by shellfish soup full of limpets and crab harvested that morning from tidal pools. For dessert, grapes and figs.

It's all part of Minoan Tastes, a culinary adventure that allows modern diners to experience what a meal would have been like on Crete in 2700 B.C., before gas stoves, nonstick pans and the rise of Ancient Greece.

"This all came together around 2007 while I was working on my Ph.D. in ancient history," says Fulbright scholar and archaeologist Jerolyn Morrison, who cofounded Minoan Tastes with photographer Stella Johnson. Morrison,

specializing in ancient ceramics, was creating earthen pots while learning how to cook with them. "I always wanted to create living experiences of ancient cooking to share the landscape of the Minoan culture," she says.

Since history lacks written recipes of the period, Morrison unearths clues at archaeological digs regarding what and how Minoans ate. Anything from the aged fragments of a decorated clay pot to the mummified remains of dried meats can fill in the details. Minoan Tastes then creates a mix of menus and tales to reveal the lives of native Minoans and the merchants visiting from civilizations in the Near East.

A favorite dish among her time-traveling guests is a recipe of brown lentils, coriander, leeks, honey and sea salt mixed with fresh olive oil and slow-cooked lamb in a sun-dried blend of cracked wheat and sour milk.

Minoan Tastes has hosted diners for Oprah Winfrey, Prince



Harry and Gloria Steinem, among others. "We'll do our events for private parties at houses, villas and gardens—or we might take them to local wineries, resorts on Crete and different festivals." The two-to-four-hour culinary journeys cost \$35 to \$175 per plate, depending on the menu, and might require eight to 12 hours of preparation.

"Our guests are either people interested in ancient cultures, or they're dragged to the event by someone who is," says Morrison. But she finds the meals resonate with most everyone. "They leave with a greater appreciation for the past and for themselves as human beings connected to that past."

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