

“Nicotera, the home of the Mediterranean Diet”



The town is 200 metres above sea level, in a natural setting of incomparable beauty - one of the finest in Italy. From here it's possible to see Mount Etna, part of Northern Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, the Serre and the Aspromonte mountainous ranges, overlooking a sea that changes from light to dark blue, reflecting the myriad colours of the sunset. The history of Nicotera goes back to

the 6th century B.C, and a succession of great civilizations have left their legacy in the local culture and cuisine.

Mediterranean Diet

Calabria is a land of great interest to nutritionists. The characteristic products of the area are part of a tradition of excellence, offering intense flavours and important nutrients. The Mediterranean Diet was first studied in Nicotera at the end of the 1950's by the team of the scientist Ancel Keys. This balanced diet has been defined as an "Italian Mediterranean Diet of Reference". In recent years, scientific evidence has shown that such a diet is associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and chronic degenerative illnesses.

Nicotera's gastronomic traditions trace the history of the Mediterranean, and are linked to uses and customs through typical local products. The diet of the community has been recognized as an "Intangible cultural heritage of humanity". The Calabrian regional authorities have promoted legislation recognizing Nicotera as "the City of the Mediterranean Diet", following a study carried out in 7 countries (Finland, Japan, Netherlands, United States, Greece, the former Yugoslavia and Italy).



Between 1954-1956, first in Naples and then in Minneapolis, a Seven Countries' Study was planned. In September 1957 a pilot study took place in Nicotera (Italy) and one month later another on Crete, in Greece. In the late 60s, an International team led by the distinguished



epidemiologist Ancel Keys, together with the American cardiologist P.D.White, the Japanese cardiologist Noboru Kimura, Flaminio Fidanza from the University of Naples, the scientists and nutritionists Alfonso Del Vecchio from University of Milan (born in Nicotera), P.Crotone from Rome, A. Kagan from London, M.Mancini from Naples, R. Buzina from Zagreb, L. Dalderup from Amsterdam, S. Pulsar and M. Kravonen from Helsinki, J. Carlotti from Paris and Puddu from Rome visited Nicotera, where they examined 607 men aged between 47-64, testing them for heart disease, hypertension, cholesterol, blood sugar levels and evaluating obesity.



The term “Italian Mediterranean Diet of Reference” refers to the diet documented by Ancel Keys’ team in Nicotera, where 55% of the active population were employed in agriculture and over 90% of them lived in the five communities of Badia, Comerconi, Nicotera Marina, Nicotera centre and Preitoni.



The Diet of people in Nicotera in the 1960s indicated a positive response regarding chronic epidemiological degenerative diseases, so making it the “Italian Mediterranean Diet of Reference”. The diet in Nicotera was, in particular, “one of moderation”, in which certain foods, typical of the Mediterranean area, had a prominent place, providing the necessary input for energy needs.

A UNESCO award recognizing the Mediterranean Diet as a world heritage represents a reminder that it comes from Nicotera.

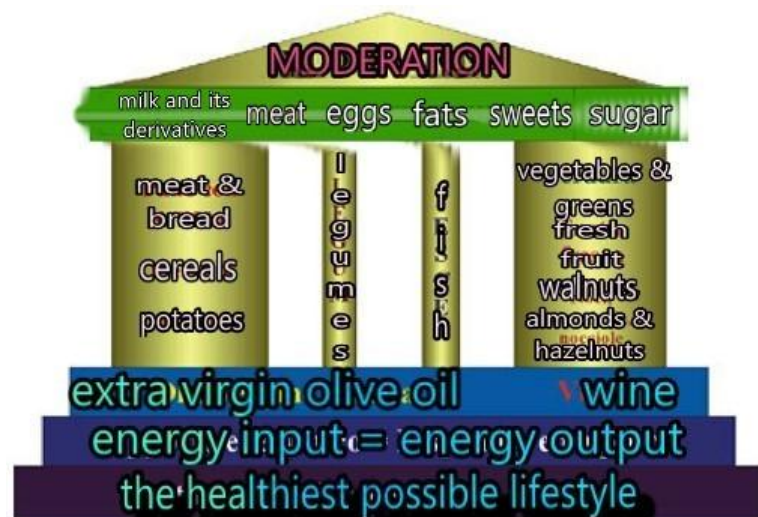
Recovering recipes from ancient traditions, through individuals, communities and institutions, helps support the resources and values of a civilization that could otherwise be at risk of extinction. We should all defend this dietary heritage and aid its diffusion throughout the world, to safeguard the



health of future generations. Some studies of the Mediterranean Diet in Nicotera continue today with the “Observatory of the Mediterranean Diet of Reference” (OdiMIR) and the International Academy of the Mediterranean Diet, in coordination with the Foundation of the Mediterranean Diet, an in-house body of the Calabrian Regional authority in Nicotera, which promotes research and disseminates the diet.

A particular appeal is made to the young, who often ignore this traditional, beneficial diet, preferring foods from other cultures - typically fast food from food chains. As a result, they are slowly destroying their health. Healthy food helps us to live well. The flavours, fragrances, palatability and benefits also taste of history, creativity and age-old wisdom. Its continuing potential for the territory is enormous. Recovering our gastronomic traditions can also be an important element in attracting tourism. Food is not only a question of nutrition, but comprises a philosophy of life that is common to the countries of the Mediterranean.

A healthy diet



The traditional diet of families in Nicotera has developed into the “Temple of the Mediterranean Diet for Adults”, which was presented at the International Conference on the European Mediterranean Diet at the University of Rome.

The two lower steps of the temple show the two basic “rules”: the possible healthy lifestyle and an energy intake equal to our energy expenditure.



Rising, we find extra virgin olive oil, the cornerstone condiment in a healthy diet, and small quantities of red wine. The columns of the temple indicate the different quantities of foods that typify the Mediterranean Diet, in which legumes and fish hold pride of place. Intake of the foods shown on the outer columns should form the greater part of the diet,

while the smaller, inner columns indicate a consumption of lesser quantities of those foods. The foods indicated above the columns are not typical elements of the Diet, and their intake should be limited to smaller quantities compared to the staple foods. At the top of the temple, the concept of moderation is highlighted to emphasize the importance of avoiding dietary excess.

