



Even basic holiday homes will have a small fridge, so make use of it to store both everyday and more exotic foods.

Anchovies in oil

(Antsóies sto láthi / αντιζούγιες στο λάδι)

Don't buy the tiny tins of anchovy fillets; you'll only end up with a semi-open, broken lid, a lacerated forefinger and smelly oil all over the place. Head for the deli counter and buy them by weight instead. True, you will be given a bag full of fillets that may well leak oil, but the risk is worth it, as the contents will be far superior.

One tip. When using anchovies in a sauce, try mashing them in with the oil or other ingredients before frying the mixture: anchovy fried on its own can taste bitter.

Butter

(Voútiro / βούτυρο)

Cooking savoury dishes with butter is unusual in most of Greece; instead Greeks use it for making pastries. But where the peppery taste of olive oil is unsuitable, they prefer clarified butter – you will find it stocked alongside the ordinary kind.

If you are feeling adventurous, check out sheep butter; identifiable by its sheep-head graphic on silver foil paper. Try it thickly spread on a slice of still-warm bread and enjoy the subtly different flavour.

Foodie zealots may be interested in tracking down the best sheep's butter, which comes from an area called Zagoria on the mainland – about a two-hour drive from Igoumenitsa, the mainland port just across from Corfu. In early spring, when the sheep have been grazing on new grass, it is worth going on a weekend pilgrimage to a mountain village to experience the utterly ambrosial combination of mountain honey, sheep's butter and bread from a wood-fired oven.



Cheese

(Tiri / τυρί)

Corfu no longer produces cheese commercially and even if its dairy industry were still thriving, it certainly couldn't cope with the influx of tourists. So a lot of dairy produce comes from a large cooperative near Ioannina on the mainland. But it's easy enough to find Greek, if not Corfiot, cheese at a deli counter or, better still, a dedicated cheese shop.

Commonly available cheeses fall into roughly three categories:

Greek hard cheeses	graveria, kaseri, képhalotyri, metsovoni
Greek soft cheeses	feta, kopanisti, manouri, myzithra
Imported cheeses	gouda, edam, parmesan, masdama

Guidebooks often suggest that *képhalotyri* is the Greek equivalent of parmesan, but a closer approximation is a hard pecorino. It doesn't have the nutty, rounded flavour of parmesan; the comparison is probably more to do with the fact that cooks use it in much the same way.

Kaseri is, to be honest, rather an uninteresting cheese. The Greeks call it 'factory cheese' because it is reconstituted from the curds of *képhalotyri*.

A good *graviera* is delicious – it is the Greek equivalent of gruyere. Most regions of Greece produce a *graviera* and they are all slightly different in flavour, so ask for a small bit to try before choosing.

To make a good *saganaki* (fried cheese), use the smoked cheese called *metsovoni kapnisto*.

It has a firm, slightly rubbery texture, comes from the Epirus region on the mainland, and is made from either cow's or sheep's milk.

Feta needs no explaining. But as easy as it is to produce and buy, quality varies. The very best feta is aged in oak barrels, and is made mainly in the Peloponnese and parts of the Epirus. And you will need to visit those areas to find it. Easier to come by in Corfu is feta that has been aged in large tins – this in turn is better than plastic-wrapped cheese. If it is too salty, soak it in water for a few hours – it will come to no harm and taste better for it.

Kopanisti is a blue goats cheese – only it isn't blue, green or grey to look at, rather a flesh-tinted white. I suspect the stuff is addictive: with the first nibble, your reaction will be 'weird', then you'll think 'well I didn't quite understand the taste, let me try it again' and an hour later significant inroads have been made into the cheese in the name of scientific research.

Mizithra should be mentioned if only because of the reaction it produces in Greeks: eyes light up or roll heavenwards depending on whether you ask if they know of it or where one can find it. It is similar to ricotta in texture and flavour and, ideally, made from sheep's milk.

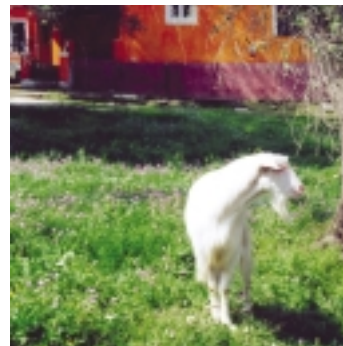
The only time the fresh unsalted cheese is likely to make an appearance in the shops is spring. But salted *mizithra* is quite often available; some people compare it to cottage cheese on the basis that both cheeses have a low fat content. In fact, the texture is different – cottage cheese is more clotted and lumpy – and *mizithra* is more salty. There is one other version of this cheese, one that is left to dry and harden before being used for grating.

Make your own mizithra

If you want to know why the Greeks make such a fuss about this delicious curd cheese, try making it yourself. First find a lactating ewe. To make around 200g of cheese you will need to extract two litres of milk from her. Hot-foot it off the hillside to the nearest available kitchen. Heat the milk in a stainless steel saucepan and as soon as it starts to boil, remove from the heat and add the juice of a lemon (without pips, naturally). Stir until it curdles i.e. it starts to look like soured milk. If the milk does not oblige, return it to a gentle heat until it does. Then pour very slowly through a sieve that has been lined with two layers of muslin.

The stuff that is left in the sieve is called curds and the liquid that you have either poured down the sink or kept in a bowl is called the whey. (In remote parts of the world, such as Turkmenistan, drinking the whey with your favoured tippie is believed to help prevent hangovers. Try it. You'll feel green round the gills long before you are over the limit.)

Fold the muslin over the curds and place a weighted plate on top to squeeze out more of the whey. Ideally pop it in the fridge overnight; the resulting curd cheese should be eaten within two to three days.





Filo pastry

(Phyllo / Φύλλο πίτας)

Pitta means pie in Greek, the most famous **pitta** of them all being **tyropitta** – cheese pie – which is made with filo pastry. However, in Corfu not all **pittes** are made with filo, particularly savoury ones. Occasionally a cook will make a thicker, homemade version of filo for an open-topped **pitta** (a kind of quiche, in other words) because commercial filo pastry is too fine to support the pie's contents.

Filo is, of course, widely available and the trick to using it successfully is to let it come to room temperature without letting it dry out. If the pastry is cold or dry it will crack and tear.

Ice-cream

(Ραγοτό / παγωτό)

Parents will have daily difficulty getting their children past the 'Algida' ice-cream cabinet stationed outside every supermarket – Algida is virtually identical to the Wall's brands available in northern Europe. As for Greek brands, there are several. For example, Delta doesn't only do dairy products and fruit juices; 'Nirvana' – which comes in tubs – is one of its popular ice-creams aimed more at grown-ups.

The health-conscious should look for tiny yoghurt pots with sticks in the chill cabinets. The idea is that once you have got them home, you put the sticks into the pots and then into the freezer. Hey presto! Yoghurt lollipops.

If you are in north-east Corfu and have a hankering for Italian ice-cream, then check out Ice-Dream at the Perithia turn-off (diagonally opposite an Eko petrol station) on the road that runs between Kassioپی and



Acharavi. This gelateria makes its ice-creams on the premises using proper milk and cream, with no preservatives. Fruit is fresh and the other ingredients – such as the hazelnut syrup – are brought over from Italy. The owner, trained in Italy, claims to be the only artisanal ice-cream maker like this in Corfu, and supplies several of the restaurants in the area.

Milk

(Ghála / γάλα)

Twenty years ago fresh milk was impossible to find, except direct from the cow. These days the difficulties are whether Light means Diet and does 1.5 per cent fat equate to semi-skimmed (no and yes respectively). The local Corfiot brand is Farmer or **Φαρμα**, which also makes delicious rice pudding.

Pickled vegetables

(Toursía / τουργσία)

A favourite nibble all over Greece, **toursía** are small, mild chilli peppers stuffed with slithers of cucumber or cabbage stalk. Find them at the deli counter.

Salted mullet roe

(Taramás / ταραμάς)

The main ingredient (well, it should be) in a taramosalata. It comes in two forms: pink and grey. The former is dyed; the latter is not – and guess which one is better. Salted mullet roe is one of Europe's oldest edible luxuries: the Greeks first started importing it from the Ancient Egyptians and the **salata** came about as a way of making this delicacy go further. They then started making it themselves but grey mullet are now scarce in the Mediterranean, so these days the Greeks import cod's roe from countries such as Norway. You may not want to

bother making the *salata*, since it requires a large pestle and mortar – for purists with time on their hands – or a food processor (see page 53 for our recipe). But *taramás* freezes well, so it is worth taking back home where it is much more difficult to come by. While in Corfu, ask for it at the deli counter:

Yoghurt

(Ghiaoúti / γιαούρτι)

Most people have come across Greek yoghurt. These days it comes in an array of disguises: half-fat, no-fat, flavoured or not. Furthermore, if you don't fancy Greek, you can opt for the German and French brands that are also readily available. But since the difference between half-fat and full-fat yoghurt is a couple of peanuts per 100ml and if, like most holidaymakers, you'll be blowing your daily recommended calorific intake on alcohol alone, how about going for the real McCoy and loving every mouthful?

At all supermarket deli counters, hidden in large buckets, will be plain, strained, whole milk yoghurt. Purchase with some honey, stir the two together according to taste, and demolish with a teaspoon, very slowly, with the Ionian Sea in the distance. Heaven.

