

Bringing Food, Culture and Passion



to the Masses



Close Up magazine meets television's Tonia Buxton, a lively, passionate and articulate woman in every sense of the word, she is not only very attractive, but she is also well-educated. Tonia demands a lot from her life, and whether it is family, friends, careers or just everyday living, she manages to give each aspect of this, the time and commitment required.

Tonia has a huge hunger for promoting her love of food to others through the medium of cooking, and she loves creating wonderful dishes that capture the excitement, romance and passion of the Mediterranean.

Tonia however, is not just a passionate woman, she is also a published author, historian, cook and television presenter. Best known for her role as host and cook on 'My Greek Kitchen' she has been trailblazing a big reputation for herself on the Discovery Channel, with a series of programmes dedicated to the cooking of traditional meals from all around Cyprus, Greece and the Mediterranean.

Tonia's programmes trace the origins of the particular dishes, the traditional ways that they are prepared and cooked, and provide a history of the areas and regions from where the dishes originate. The second series has just been completed and will be aired on Discovery Channel's Travel and Living on Sky 283 at the end of this month. Being a native of Cyprus and a fluent Greek speaker, Tonia has always had a passion for creating wonderful traditional dishes for her family and friends, and she honed her culinary skills as a child in her Mother's kitchen. As a student and graduate of Classical History from the University of North London, she embarked on a teaching career which not only developed her presentation skills, but also enriched a love of communication across all genders, cultures and nationalities.

She and her architect husband, Paul, have 3 children, (Sophia, Antigoni and toddler Zeph)

with a fourth one due to arrive in August. From their spacious home in Finchley, North London, the couple juggle all of the responsibilities of providing a home and raising a family, while still preserving their independent careers as well.

Given all of the above, Tonia saw an opportunity of promoting her love of food and cooking to a much wider audience, and perhaps create a new career for herself as well. Three years of knocking on doors ensued, before Tonia persuaded Isis Media to develop the format of a programme for Satellite TV, by this time she was 8 months pregnant, but still as passionate about her original idea.

The format for the 15 programmes is simple but inspired, with each show taking place in a different sun-drenched location situated around Greece and Cyprus; these locations included everything from rural coastal villages to big and bustling city centres. Tonia would go out to local markets, tavernas and homes discovering the secrets of Greek gastronomy, and collecting recipes for each particular dish. She would then prepare and cook these dishes for special family occasions including weddings, Birthday parties and any other celebration. When Tonia sourced the ingredients she would chat to family and friends, local market traders and shopkeepers to uncover the fact and folklore behind each region's unique and fantastic cuisine.

Tonia has always had a passion for creating wonderful traditional dishes for her family and friends

While Tonia's entertainment career is very important to her, she has never lost sight of her other responsibilities. "Family always comes first with me" states Tonia "If it was down to a choice between career or family, the career would definitely lose out, and there would be no regrets. My family and extended family are too big a thing in my life, in fact, they are all involved in one way or another with both my private and professional life.

Tonia has a desire to promote Greek and Mediterranean cooking to the masses, because we see so little of the large variety of dishes that originate from that part of the world. "While there are several restaurants dedicated to Greek and Cypriot dishes" she explains, "we only see a very small representation of the traditional meals that have sustained these regions over the past years.

Unlike other TV celebrity chefs and cooks, Tonia is not obsessed with the running of her own restaurant, but given a clean copy-book, a fair wind and some very hefty finance, she has some wonderful ideas for the creation of a country-wide chain of restaurants dedicated to the traditional fare that she has promoted in her programmes. There is no doubt that Tonia's passion for sun-drenched Greece and Cyprus is intoxicating, but why not give some of her excellent dishes a try, and tune in to her new show on the Discovery Channel. ☺



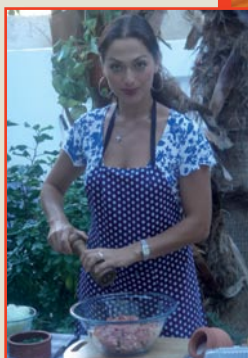
recipes for the masses

kalamari squid

- 3lb (1 ½ kg) of small sized squid
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 Greek coffee cup of rice
- ½ a glass of olive oil
- 1 large onion finely chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic finely sliced
- ½ a glass of dry white wine
- 2 tomatoes chopped
- 2 tablespoons of tomato puree
- 1 teaspoon parsley
- 1 large stick of cinnamon

- 1) Prepare the squid by pulling the tentacles away from the body, the insides and head should all come away.
- 2) Cut and keep the tentacles, chopping them up, discard the rest including the transparent spine.
- 3) Turn the squid inside out rinse under cold water and then soak in lemon juice
- 4) Meanwhile to make the stuffing heat about 4 tablespoons of the oil and sweat off the onion, add the chopped tentacles and cook for a couple of minutes.
- 5) Stir in the rice and stir until it becomes transparent then add the wine, tomato puree, garlic, spices & season.
- 6) Cook till the juice has been absorbed by the rice.
- 7) Stuff the squid allowing room for the rice to swell and secure with a toothpick.
- 8) Pack tightly into a baking dish, place an upside down plate on top to weigh the squid down.
- 9) Pour over a marinade of ¼ glass of olive oil & the juice of a lemon, and enough boiling water to cover.
- 10) Bake for around 1 ½ hours on 180°C or till the squid is tender.

Can be served hot or cold as a main dish with fat Cypriot chips and salad or as a starter or part of a meze.



keftethes meat balls

- 1kg pork mince coarsely cut (OR 500g pork & 500g beef)
- 1 kg potatoes grated
- 2 large onions chopped
- ¼ loaf of stale bread, made into bread crumbs (the best is a circular Greek loaf)
- 1 large bunch of flat leave parsley
- 1 small bunch fresh mint
- 3 eggs
- salt, pepper & cinnamon to season.
- Olive oil (or ground nut oil if you prefer)

These are traditional Greek meatballs.

When my Mother would make these, they would never get to the dining table, we would eat them up as they came out of the pan, burning our tongues along the way.

Now they are a firm favourite of my children and a total meal in themselves!

- 1) In a large bowl mix all the ingredients together, kneading well.
- 2) Flatten the mixture and pour over a film of Olive oil to cover the mixture. Put into the fridge to rest for half an hour.
- 3) Put lots of olive oil (or ground nut oil) into a deep pan, the oil needs to be very hot, to keep the keftethes crispy on the outside.
- 4) Take some of the meat mixture and make into your preferred shape. Always have a pot of cold water nearby to dip your hand in to stop them from getting too sticky.
- 5) Place into the hot oil, if making the larger oval ones, you will need approximately 10 minutes frying time each side, till they are a lovely golden brown. Place a few at a time.
- 6) Once cooked put on kitchen towels to drain.
- 7) Serve hot, cold, room temperature, it makes no difference, they are delicious however!

They can be the main part of a meal, big oval meatballs served with fresh yogurt and lemon wedges and of course a fresh Greek salad.

Or you can serve them as part of a meze or for a party, you then make smaller circular balls. Serve with some hummous, pitta bread, olives & capers.

