Vegetables were a huge part of the Greek diet. Most Greeks ate a diet that was almost vegetarian. Among the most common vegetables and plants eaten by Greeks were asparagus, fennel, cucumbers, chickpeas, and celery. They also gathered and boiled dandelions to eat. The bulbs of certain plants, such as iris, were also edible. They even ate stinging nettles!

Fruits and nuts were also a large part of the Greek diet. Apples, pears, cherries and mulberries grew wild and were available throughout Greece. Damsons, a fruit related to plums, were also a favorite of the Greeks.

Perhaps the most important food to the ancient (and modern) Greeks was the olive. It was not simply a food. It was also a big part of Greek history. Greeks believed that the goddess Athena gave the first olive tree to Athens before it eventually spread to the rest of Greece. Olives were used in many recipes. Olives were also crushed and their oil was used for lamps. Olive oil could also be used as a beauty product. Women rubbed into their skin to make it soft and shiny.

Honey was another important Greek food. It was used much like we use sugar, as a sweetener in many different foods. It could also be used as a medicine. Greeks were fond of honey because they believed that Zeus was fed milk and honey as a baby. For them, honey was almost magical. Many families kept beehives and took good care of their bees!

Ancient Greeks didn’t eat much meat. But since Greece is surrounded by water, fish were easy to get. Many varieties were available in the markets. Many Greeks thought of eating meat as something that barbarians did. The Greeks believed they were more civilized than that. As a result, they hardly ate meat at all.

The way that Greeks ate was also important. Having a meal was not only about eating food. It was also a chance to talk and enjoy the company of family and friends. A Greek meal was an event! This is still the case in modern-day Greece, where dinner with friends and family may last for hours!

**A typical meal in ancient Greece almost always included these things:**

* Bread: this was a huge part of the Greek diet. It’s believed that the Greeks had between 50 and 70 different varieties of bread.
* Wine: the Greeks loved it, and even had rules on how to drink it properly. Wine was especially important for the symposia, a meeting of men to talk about ideas.
* Olive oil: Nearly all Greek dishes used olives, or were cooked using olive oil. Even today, Greeks consume more olives than any other country in the world.

The ancient Greeks simply made use of the foods that were available. But we now know that the Greek diet was (and still is) very healthy. The Greeks may have found the key to living longer! But if it’s all the same to you, I’ll skip the stinging nettles!