

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Pontic Greek cuisine: the most common foods, ingredients, and dishes presented in cookbooks and folklore literature

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Abstract

Introduction: The Pontic Greeks, besides their long and distinguished history, have a special and important culture and identity, elements of which are still preserved and active by their descendants a century after their settlement in Greece. One element of their identity and culture is their basic yet diverse cuisine, which is an important and recognized local cuisine in contemporary Greece. This study aimed to identify the most common foods, ingredients, and dishes found in Greek Pontic Cuisine.

Methods: Six cookbooks, two cooking magazines, four folklore books, and four folklore magazines were reviewed in this study. A considerable amount of data was collected and processed using a text analysis tool.

Results and discussion: The study provides the most frequently encountered dishes, foods, and ingredients that feature in the publications. The most common dishes are soups, including *tanomenon sorva* (soup with coarse grains, salty strained yogurt, and mint). Among other dishes, *siron* (a pre-baked filo-based pastry dish), *chavitz* (a thick corn dish resembling porridge), and *foustoron* (an omelet with fresh cow butter) are quite common. Common staples are anchovies and greens. In cookbooks and cookery magazines, ingredients include butter, wheat, eggs, tomatoes, milk, bulgur, corn-flour, and cheese. Meanwhile, the study publications are an excellent way of passing down traditional food knowledge intergenerational, as they are largely descended from Pontic Greek progenitors.

Conclusion: After analyzing all the publications, it was declared that dairy products, grains, and vegetables were commonly used in Pontic cuisine. It was concluded that cookbooks are crucial for the preservation of the Greek Pontic culinary tradition.

Keywords: Pontic Greek cuisine, Pontic diet, Pontic Greeks, Cookbooks, Folklore publications, Common foods, Traditional foods

Introduction

Food is a fundamental human need and an important component of our personal, family, and social well-being [1, 2]. It also serves as a means of communication through which we create, organize, and share meaning [3]. In Montanari's words, "food is culture," especially

when it is produced, prepared, and eaten [4]. Since food and cuisine are symbolic representations of culture [5], they significantly contribute to personal and social identity [6–9]. Moreover, multi-culturally enriched dietary preferences and eating habits that are passed down from generation to generation are strongly related to the family environment and community [10] and are often resistant given their embedded nature in an individual's life [11].

The term "traditional" refers to the intergenerational transmission of food culture [12]. However, this definition is geographical, composition, preparation, and

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processing dependent [13–15]. Traditional foods have a specific cultural identity [14] and are the imprint of the past in the modern lives of every culture. They are considered to be foods with beneficial properties because of their naturalness and inherited local preparation and processing [12, 15]. The unique ingredients and the utilization of very specific, traditional manufacturing methods have heightened interest in local and traditional foods in recent years [16–19].

European culture, identity, and culinary heritage are all shaped by traditional foods. Traditional food products have not only grown in popularity among consumers but also in policy discourse, particularly in the European Union. They are, therefore, immensely important throughout Europe [20]. In 2012, the European Commission updated the definition of the term "traditional" in foods, where it "means proven usage in the domestic market for a period that allows transmission between generations; this period is to be at least 30 years" [21]. Traditional and geographical indicators to food products, such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), or Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG), have been defined also by EU Regulation 2082/92 [22], as part of a food quality policy, maintaining and safeguarding their authenticity and origin [23].

In parallel, culinary tradition is classified as one of the core areas of intangible cultural heritage, along with social practices, rituals, and festivities [24]. There are several factors that determine the value of the culinary heritage, including commercialization, the influence of tourism, and globalization. The Mediterranean diet is certainly the best-known example, having been recognized by UNESCO [25] as an intangible cultural heritage of Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal. Moreover, the Mediterranean diet is as diverse as the societies that surround the Mediterranean region.

Greek cuisine, simple and basically traditional [26], is a component of the Mediterranean diet, as well as a part of Greece's lengthy history and the progeny of the Greek countryside [27]. Greek cuisine initially featured dishes from both mainland Greece and the Cyclades. Until the Treaty of Lausanne, the Ionian Islands, Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, and the North Aegean Islands were gradually incorporated [27]. Following the displacement of the Greeks (Asia Minor, Pontus, Cappadocia) and the exchange of populations, under the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), their cuisine inspired local cuisine [28], particularly that of Macedonia (Fig. 1), a province of Northern Greece that was inhabited for centuries by Albanians, Bulgarians, Vlachs, Slavs, Sarakatsani, Armenians, Roma, Pomaks, and Sephardic Jews. Eventually, all these cuisines became part of the evolution of Greek cuisine [29].

The Pontic Greeks, whose homeland was proximate to the Black Sea Region of Turkey (Fig. 2), have one of the most fascinating and "non-Mediterranean" Greek regional cuisines [30]. Pontic Greek traditional cuisine is diverse and simplistic, incorporating traditions from mountainous and coastal regions, ancient Greece, nomadic regions, and influences from Russian, Turkish, Laz, Hemshin, and Armenian cuisines [31–35]. Greek Pontic cuisine consists primarily of grains and dairy products and its foundation is formed by fermented milk products and a plethora of grilled dough dishes [36, 37].

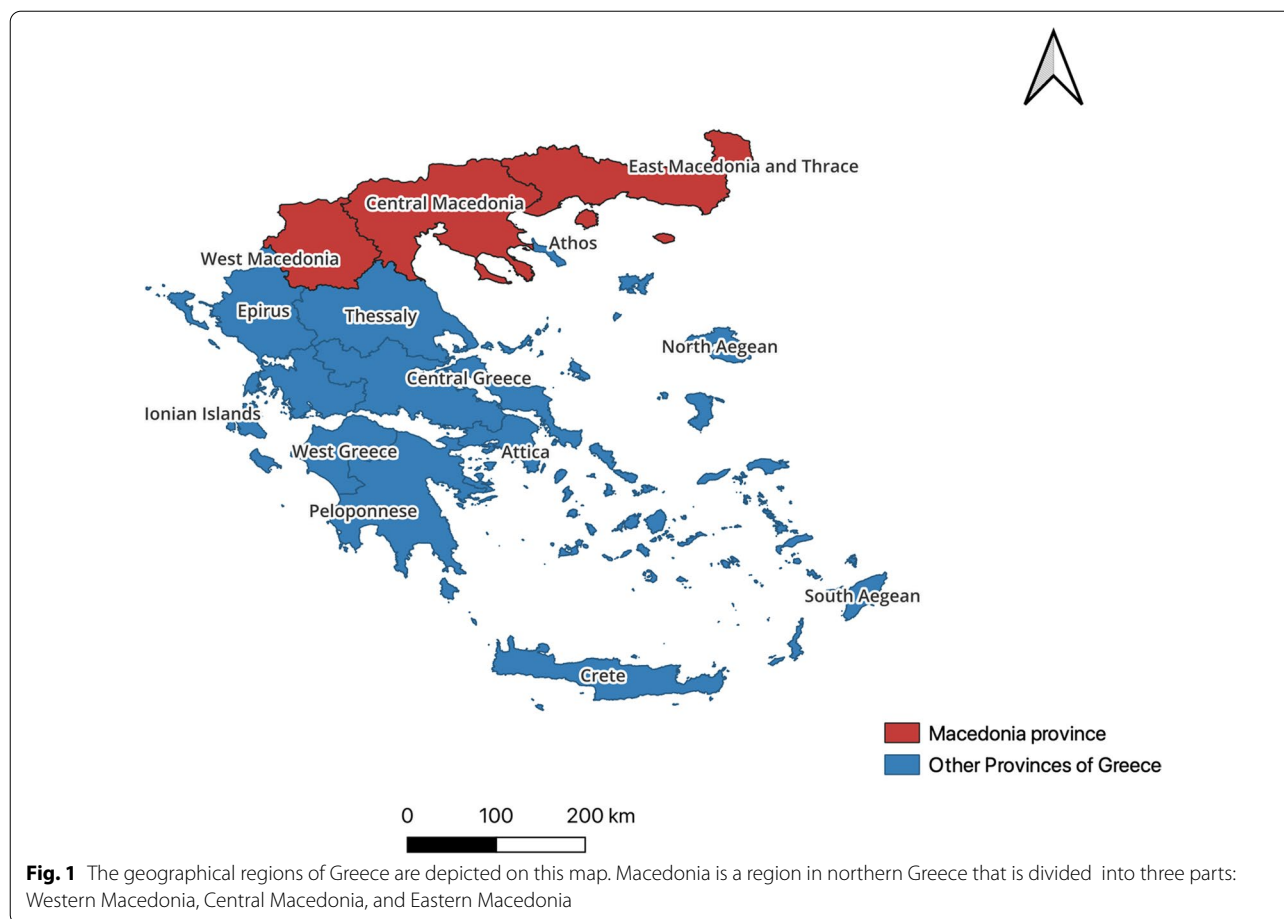
Food and cuisine are part of the ethno-regional identity of Pontic Hellenism, which originated in Pontus (homeland) and was transferred to Greece (new place of settlement) [38]. For Pontic Greeks, food reinforces individual identity but also a sense of belonging to a group, a sense of communal solidarity and cohesion [39]. Since the Pontic Greek foodways are so important to their identity, they serve as the basis for academic and folkloric studies, and cookbooks are powerful tools. Furthermore, cookbooks can provide access to local culture and shed light on the interaction of local and national cultures [40].

The popularity of Greek traditional foods and local dishes has increased the number of cookbooks published in recent years. Local and ethnic cuisines are mentioned in some of these books, confirming the diversity of Greek culinary tradition. This research uses data from cookbooks and folklore publications to determine the most prevalent ingredients, foods, and dishes in Greek Pontic cuisine.

The Pontic region

The name "Pontic Greeks" comes from the term Pontus, after the Greek name *Efxeinós Pontos*, which means "hospitable sea," regarding the ancient Greek community that lived in northern Turkey for centuries [41]. The Ottomans referred to them as *Rum*, as a religious community and as an ethnic group [42]. In essence, the Pontus region can be seen as a modern analog of today's Black Sea in Turkey.

The Pontus is fringed by the Pontic Alps, a large mountain range that stretches from east to west along the southern coastline of the Black Sea (Fig. 2) [43]. The coastline is fringed by rainforests that turn into large pastures in summer [44]. For the Pontic Greeks, the topography had a great impact on their history as it protected them from foreign invaders. For this reason, distinct economies and cultures naturally formed in this area [45–47]. The Pontus was mainly a productive and prosperous agricultural region. Giresun and Tirebolu produced a lot of hazelnuts, while oranges, potatoes, and onions were grown in Rize. Trebizond produced a lot of milk, butter, wheat, barley, corn, and potatoes. Besides



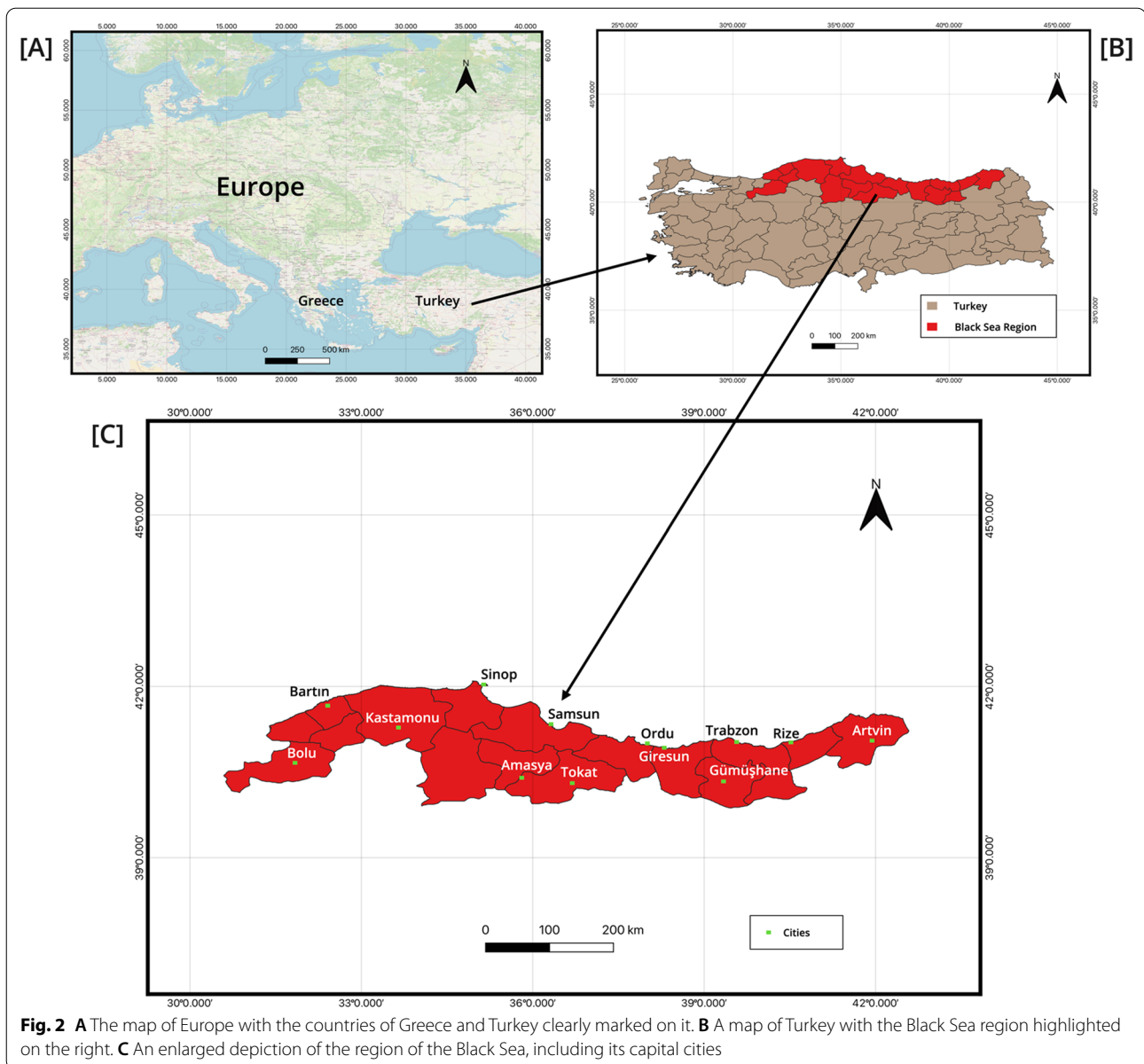
food, Pontos was also rich in material resources. The mines of Gyumushkana, Tirebolu, and Koyulhisar were famous. Handicrafts and trade also grew [48].

Following ethnic and religious tension in both the Turkish and Greek regions, the authorities decided to perform a population exchange within these areas. Thousands of Turkish and Greek residents of Greece and Turkey who had lived there for hundreds of years were forced to migrate to another place. The process that turned minorities into refugees in both nations was codified when Turkey and Greece signed the Population Exchange Convention in Lausanne on January 30, 1923 [49]. However, Article 2 of the same Convention excluded the Muslims of Western Thrace (a Greek province) and the Greeks of Constantinople (Istanbul) from the exchange. Pontic Greeks settled mainly in Greece and the former Soviet Union after the Lausanne Treaty [50, 51]. After the population exchange, Greece had to deal with around 1.5 million refugees, most of whom were in a state of complete poverty [52, 53]. Their arrival in northern Greece (Macedonia and Thrace provinces) was extensively promoted by the Greek state. The largest mass migration waves of

Pontic Greeks from the former Soviet Union took place in 1939, 1965, and 1988 [54]. The population of the Pontic Greeks is estimated to be 2,000,000 worldwide, with most of them now living in Greece [55]. Despite the fact that, in Greek historiography, population exchange is a symbol of national failure [56], the Pontic Greeks have been particularly successful in preserving their ethnic identity [57].

Pontic Greek cuisine

The Greek Pontic traditional cuisine is characterized by simplicity and doricity, using simple ingredients, simple processing methods, and fast cooking [31, 37]. The diversity of this cuisine is the consequence of a historical confluence of geographical, social, and cultural elements. Culture is undoubtedly the most obvious factor in a community's or ethnic group's food preferences and choices, a fact that also applies to the Pontic Greeks and has deep historical roots [58, 59]. The environment, rituals and belief systems, human endeavors, and economic and political systems are also contributors. Furthermore, the cuisine of the various cohabiting ethnicities (Armenians,



Turks, Russians, Hemshin, Laz) that coexisted in the Pontic region influenced Greek Pontic cuisine. Some of the common dishes found in these cuisines are *tzirichta* (a type of donut), *malez* (flour porridge), *siron* (a pre-baked filo-based pastry dish), and *borscht* (a hearty broth with meat and various vegetables).

Gastronomy in Pontus developed reverently following seasonality. However, the uncertainty created by the weather during the winter in Pontus forced the invention of ways of preservation and storage of food and raw materials (pickles, salted fish, pre-cooked pasta, cheeses,

dried fruits, and vegetables) [60]. Vegetables, wheat, corn, and dairy products were the major product sources. Various methods were used to turn abundant summer milk into nutritious artisanal dairy products. The Pontic diet has religious roots. In the Orthodox Church, there are strict dietary restrictions and a long-term fast [39]. Along with wider acceptability and enforcement, fasting is a very significant cultural phenomenon [61].

Dairy products, especially those from lactic acid fermentation, led to the dietary and gastronomic "Pontian Galaxy" [62]. The most common are *tyrin* (cheese),

oxygala (yoghurt), and *tan* (butter milk). Consumption of fermented dairy products is the key to longevity. The beneficial effect of probiotics on longevity was first disseminated by Metchnikoff in the early twentieth century [63], but was not picked up by the medical world until after the mid-1990s and is now a popular research topic [64]. Grains such as *pligouri* (bulgur), *korkota* (coarsely ground grains), *fourniko alevri* (baked corn flour) and barley flour cover a wide range of foods. Another culinary feature of the area of Pontus was the pre-baked pasta. Pre-baked pasta has the advantage of being cooked in a shorter amount of time than commercial pasta, while also being easily digestible and causing rapid satiety [65]. Soups, legumes, eggs, wild edible greens, fish, peas, and many pickled vegetables enrich the diet of Pontic Greeks [36, 37, 66–68]. Tables 1 and 2 provide a comprehensive reference to the food products and dishes of Greek Pontic cuisine, respectively.

Materials and methods

Cookbooks, culinary magazines, and folklore sources were consulted to determine the most common foods, ingredients, and dishes of Greek Pontic cuisine. Cookbooks were also chosen for research because, aside from their growing popularity [69, 70], they are among the most valuable resources for studying food, culture, and society [71]. Cookbooks are written records of oral heritage [72] that mirror social evolution and history [73, 74]. Likewise, they can contribute to the development of national and cultural identities [5, 40, 75], as well as the preservation of a link to one's ethnic heritage [76]. Nevertheless, recipes from extinct worlds, such as those of the Pontic Greeks, are highly valuable cultural elements [77].

As Greek traditional cuisine has emerged with a variety of local dishes and food products, the pace of cookbook publishing in Greece has skyrocketed. Some of these cookbooks focus on regional or ethnic cuisines, like the popular Cretan cuisine, which is associated

Table 1 A list of common traditional Greek Pontic cuisine food products

Food groups	Product name	Description
Milk products	<i>Tan</i>	A by-product of butter extraction; a popular fermented beverage
	<i>Yliston</i>	Strained yoghurt with a sour taste
	<i>Paskitan</i>	Skimmed salty yoghurt
Cheese Products	<i>Tsokalik</i>	Soft cheese with a pleasant sour taste, lightly salted
	<i>Tsortan</i>	Hard cheese with sour taste
	<i>Koloth</i>	Cheese like gruyere
	<i>Mintzin</i>	A whey cheese
Meat products	<i>Kavourmas</i>	Sautéed cured beef in its own fat
	<i>Pastourmas</i>	A highly seasoned, air-dried cured meat
	<i>Soutzouki</i>	A dried fermented sausage
Fruit products	<i>Pekmez</i>	Fruit molasses
Grain products	<i>Pligouri</i>	A cleaned, cooked, dried, cracked, wheat
	<i>Korkota</i>	Coarsely ground grains
	<i>Fourniko alevri</i>	Baked-roasted corn flour
Pasta products	<i>Makarina</i>	Dried homemade pasta
	<i>Evrise</i>	Sheeted and cut dough that has been pre-baked
	<i>Fyllota</i>	Round pre-baked thin sheets of dough made with flour, water, and salt
Vegetable products	<i>Home-dried vegetables</i>	Salads were made with dried wild edible greens, such as avloukia (<i>Rumex Pantientia</i>), and other dried vegetables
	<i>Stypa</i>	Pickled vegetables (white cabbage, kale, eggplants, cucumbers, green beans)
Fish products	<i>Pasta chapsia</i>	Salt-cured anchovies

Table 2 A list of main traditional Greek Pontic cuisine dishes

Type of dish	Usual name	Description
Soups, broths, and porridges	<i>Tanosourvin</i>	Soup with tan
	<i>Paskitanomalezon</i>	Soup with paskitan and flour
	<i>Tanomenon sorva</i>	Soup with korkota, paskitan, and mint
	<i>Tyroklosti</i>	Porridge with cheese, butter, and corn flour
	<i>Hasil</i>	Dish made by cooking wheat flour in water and pouring over it butter, milk, honey, sugar, or fruit broth
	<i>Chavitz</i>	Thick porridge meal with butter or milk cream and roasted corn flour
	<i>Pousintia</i>	Thick porridge made from roasted barley flour (Butter, honey or molasses were added to the middle of this porridge)
	<i>Malez</i>	A flour soup with butter and garlic or onions
	<i>Portz</i>	Broth using beef and numerous vegetables (Borscht) (Russian origin)
Egg dishes	<i>Foustoron</i>	An omelet with butter
	<i>Melofoustouron</i>	An omelet with honey
	<i>Felia</i>	Alike French toast with butter, milk, cinnamon, and honey or sugar
Dairy dishes	<i>Papara</i>	A plain dish with yoghurt or milk combined with bread bites
	<i>Paskitanofaei</i>	Dish with paskitan, tan, flour, and onion
Vegetable dishes	<i>Mavrolachana me fasoulia or goulia</i>	Kale with beans
	<i>Lachanontomades</i>	Kale leaves stuffed with minced meat
	<i>Kologkythomalezon</i>	Porridge with mashed pumpkin and corn flour
	<i>Galatogkolokython</i>	Pumpkin cooked with milk
	<i>Maposourv</i>	Soup with white cabbage and korkota
	<i>Porania</i>	Beet greens cooked with butte and garlic, and topped with yoghurt
Grain dishes	<i>Chapsopilafon</i>	Pilaf with anchovies
	<i>Sarmades</i>	Rolls of kale leaves stuffed with bulgur
	<i>Vrasti</i>	Pilaf with a variety of wild edible greens
	<i>Tzoumour</i>	Delicacy with bread crumbs and butter
	<i>Vrastarin</i>	Bread crumbs with hot water, butter, and onion
	<i>Trimman</i>	Dish with small crumbs of dough, cooked with butter and onions
Pasta and Dough	<i>Siron</i>	A pre-baked filo-based pastry dish with browned butter and smashed garlic poured over it
	<i>Pisia</i>	Pancakes with butter accompanied by either sugar or honey
	<i>Diamesia</i>	Pie with green vegetables
	<i>Psathyria</i>	Bread made of butter
	<i>Tzirichta</i>	A type of donuts
	<i>Perek</i>	Pie made by <i>fyllota</i> with cheese (<i>mintzin</i>)
	<i>Varenika</i>	Dough pockets (equivalent to ravioli) with spicy filling (cheese or minced meat, onions, black pepper, and parsley) (Russian origin)
	<i>Piroshki</i>	Fried yeast dough buns with filling (potato or cheese or minced meat) (Russian origin)
	Meat dishes	<i>Kioftedes</i>
<i>Keskek</i>		Chicken combined with wheat or barley stew
Fish dishes	<i>Chapsopita</i>	Pie with anchovies
	<i>Chapsoplakin</i>	Anchovies cooked with various vegetables

Table 2 (continued)

Type of dish	Usual name	Description
Legume and pulse dishes	<i>Chapsoustron</i>	Omelet with anchovies
	<i>Fasoulotiganon</i>	Omelet with beans
	<i>Fasoulosirv</i>	Soup with korkota and beans
Desserts and sweets	<i>Pourmas</i>	Rolled baklava (A buttery, sweet pastry with layers of nuts and syrup and crunchy phyllo)
	<i>Tsorekin</i>	Buns with butter and sugar
	<i>Chosaf</i>	A compote of dried fruits
	<i>Kollyva</i>	A sweet memorial dish prepared with boiled wheat, raisins, nuts, and sugar

with the Mediterranean diet. For reference, cookery books have been published on a variety of ethnic cuisines, such as the Vlachs, Laconians, and Pontic Greeks. Greek Pontic cuisine continues to be a very admired regional cuisine in Greece. This appears to be validated by the publication of six cookbooks on Pontic Greek cuisine in recent years. Besides that, the publication of two entire issues of the well-recognized and nationally published cooking magazine *Gastronomos* devoted to Greek Pontic cuisine, and the growing number of events dedicated to Greek Pontic cuisine by many local cultural associations, confirm the widespread popularity of the Greek Pontic cuisine. Also present in Northern Greece are a variety of small-scale food enterprises producing pasta, wheat, corn, and dairy products, all of which contribute to the dissemination of Greek Pontic cuisine. In addition, traditional recipes of Greek Pontic origin are becoming increasingly available online.

Meanwhile, studies on Greek Pontic cuisine have been published recently [39, 78].

As for research materials, 6 cookbooks (Fig. 3) [32, 36, 66, 68, 79, 80], 2 cooking magazines (Fig. 4) [81, 82], 4 folklore books (Fig. 5) [83–86], and 4 folklore magazines (Fig. 6) [87–90] were selected (Table 3). Using the “Historical Dictionary of the Pontic Dialect” [91] was necessary for comprehending some names of Pontic foods and dishes, as well as their accurate representation in the text. Special emphasis is given to the collection of names of foods, ingredients, and dishes mentioned in the above publications. The current research recommends a thorough reading, as in folklore publications, the link between food, ingredients, and dishes is not so profound as in titles of articles or sections. One author is Greek of Pontic descent, so he is familiar with Pontic food culture. This enhances the reading and discovery of the constituents of Greek Pontic cuisine.



Fig. 3 The cookbooks examined in this study: (1) Cooking and confectionery of Pontus, (2) Delicacies of Pontic cuisine, (3) The Pontic diet, (4) Asia Minor cuisine, (5) The Pontic cuisine of Maria Lois, (6) Menu of Pontus



Fig. 4 The covers of the cooking magazine "Gastronomos" dedicated to Pontic cuisine: (1) Pontus cuisine, (2) Pontus treasures: Memories and recipes passed down through generations

The food items, ingredients, and composite dishes were recorded on *Apple's Numbers* spreadsheet software after being reviewed and documented extensively [92]. Initially, the names of foods, ingredients, and recipes were collected from all the above books, with the final number of entries being 2095. A second database was then made of the ingredients in the recipes from cookbooks and cooking magazines, with 6131 items recorded. The repeated mention of a food item in the text of an article or a book chapter was not counted. The database was meticulously created, and the recordings were double-checked. In the original listing, all Greek food names, ingredients, and dishes are transliterated into Latin. That way, the original name of the item or dish is preserved. The Latin transliteration is based on the ELOT 743:2001 standard, which relies on ISO 843:1999 [93]. In the second database, most ingredient names are translated into English, while some are transliterated from Greek into Latin.

We employed *Voyant tools* [94] suitable for text analysis [95] to depict common Pontic cuisines, ingredients, and recipes, providing data in a creative and reader-friendly way [96]. As a result of our research, we created word clouds that excluded words like "the," "and," and "but" as well as common foods (water, salt, pepper, oregano,

parsley, cinnamon, lemon, oil, and herbs), by putting the most frequently used words in the center and enlarging them to visualize variants. They display the frequency of various words in a text, but they may be used for much more than that. Although word clouds have limitations as an analytical tool, the academic community has embraced them [95, 97, 98].

Results

According to several publications, such as cookbooks, this study examines the most frequently occurring foods, ingredients, and dishes in Greek Pontic cuisine. The purpose of this introductory approach to the analysis of these publications was to highlight the fundamental elements of this simple yet intriguing cuisine. These books provide more than just recipes. They introduce the reader to the home-cooking process of Pontic Greeks.

Most cookbooks provide recipes based on the type of dish being prepared, whereas only the dishes of the cookbook *Menu of Pontus* present recipes and diverse products depending on seasonality and the annual cycle of feasts. Cooking recipes are frequently accompanied by intriguing folkloric elements that enhance the overall experience. Consequently, there is a projection of everyday life in the sphere of goods and dish preparation

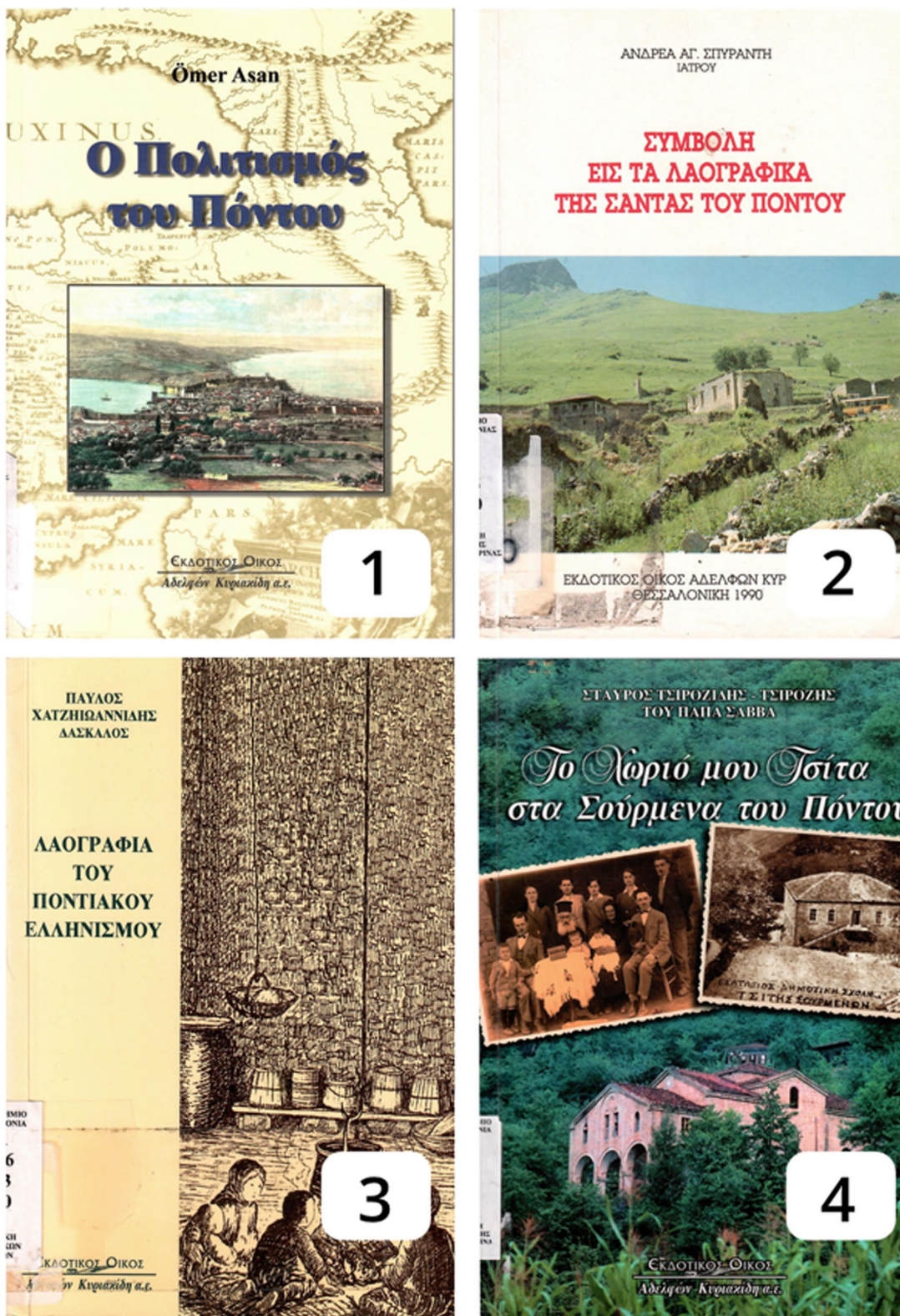


Fig. 5 The covers of folklore books that have been studied: (1) Pontus culture, (2) Contribution to the folklore of Santa of Pontus, (3) Folklore of Pontic Hellenism, (4) My village Tsita in Sürmene of Pontus



Fig. 6 Selected folklore magazines for this study: (1) Pontic Pages, (2) Pontic Chronicles

throughout the broader Pontus area. The diversity of Greek Pontic cuisine is quite well known, and variations of the dishes are frequently presented to demonstrate this.

In many cases, soups are made with water, milk, or yogurt, and in others, one type of grain or a combination of grains is used, as in the case of *tanomenon sorva* (cooking with decorticated wheat or a combination of decorticated wheat and barley). Further, *chavitz*, which is cooked with wheat flour in some places but with maize or roasted maize flour in others, is a dish that has been prepared in a variety of ways. This was motivated by disparities in what could and could not be cultivated in each location of Pontus. Grains like maize, in general, do not flourish at high altitudes [99]. As a result, the dishes were modified based on what the family had sourced.

What is noticeable is that most of the recipes combine dairy and cereals, with butter serving a prominent role. However, olive oil is frequently recommended as a substitute for butter. This could be attributable to the fact that olive oil is commonly accessible in every Greek household, or it might be for reasons related to the healthy characteristics of the Mediterranean diet. Of course,

this may not be the best approach considering that the Greeks of Pontus are known for their "buttery" cuisine. On the other hand, it may be a way to enable contemporary Greeks, with or without Pontic origins, to become more familiar with Pontic cuisine.

In order to identify the frequency of occurrence of foods, ingredients, and dishes associated with Greek Pontic cuisine, we utilized *Voyant tools* to generate two word-clouds from our data analysis, as shown in Figs. 7 and 8, respectively. We examined the complete list of publications to produce the first word-cloud (Fig. 7), and we used only the cookbooks and culinary periodicals identified in the list to generate the second one (Fig. 8). At first glance, certain informed conclusions may be drawn about these word-clouds, but more research into the frequency of dishes or cuisines is required.

According to Fig. 7, beans, kale, bulgur, coarse cereals, soups, pilaf, *chavitz*, and *foustoron* are the foods and dishes with the highest frequency. Soups, bulgur, and beans are all common foods based on an analysis of the data collected from all publications. Table 4 shows the ten most popular dishes and their recipes. Soup was a popular dish among Pontic Greeks, so it is no

Table 3 List of publications studied

Author	Year	Title	Type of publication	Publisher
Kampouridou, Tasoula	1985	Mageiriki kai Zacharoplastiki tou Pontou (Cooking and confectionery of Pontus)	Cookbook	n. p
Kiziridou, Thomais	2020	Nostimies tis Pontiakis Kouzinas (Delicacies of Pontic Cuisine)	Cookbook	Ekdoseis Paideia/Malliaris Paideia A.E
Savvidis, Thomas	2020	Pontiaki Diatrofi (The Pontic Diet)	Cookbook	Ekdoseis Kyriakidi
Mpozi, Soula	2005	Mikrasiatiki Kouzina (Asia Minor Cuisine)	Cookbook	Ellinika Grammata
Loi, Maria	2009	<i>I Pontiaki Kouzina tis Marias Loi</i> (The Pontic Cuisine of Maria Lois)	Cookbook	Motivo
Grigoriadou, Efi	2004	Edesmatologion tou Pontou (Menu of Pontus)	Cookbook	Ekdoseis Kochlias
Ömer, Asan	2007	O Politismos tou Pontou (The culture of Pontus)	Folklore book	Afoi Kyriakidi
Spyrantis, Andreas	1990	Symvoli eis ta laografika tis Santas tou Pontou (Contribution to the folklore of Santa of Pontus)	Folklore book	Afoi Kyriakidi
Chatziioannidis, Pavlos	2000	Laografia tou Pontiakou Ellinismou (Folklore of Pontic Hellenism)	Folklore book	Afoi Kyriakidi
Tsirozidis-Tsirozis Stavros	2000	<i>To chorio mou Tsita sta Sourmena tou Pontou</i> (My village Tsita in Sürmene of Pontus)	Folklore	Afoi Kyriakidi
Rentoulas, Angelos Ed	2013 2020	Gastronomos (Gastronomist)	Cooking Magazine	Kathimerines Ekdoseis Mon. A.E
Mavridou-Apostolidou, Chrysa Ed	2016–2019	Parakath ki arothymias (Togetherness and Nostalgia)	Cooking and Folklore Magazine	Politistikos Syllogos Pontion Thryloriou "I Kerasounta kai to Gars"
Epitropi Pontiakon Meleton (The Committee for Pontian Studies)	1928–2020	Archeion Pontou (Pontic Archives)	Folklore Magazine	Epitropi Pontiakon Meleton (The Committee for Pontian Studies)
Fokas, Giorgos Ed. Epitropi Pontiakon Meleton (The Committee for Pontian Studies)	1936–1940	Pontiaka Fylla (Pontic Pages)	Folklore Magazine	n. p [98]
Ktenidis, Filon	1950–1963	Pontiaki Estia (Pontic Epicentre)	Folklore Magazine	Filon Ktenidis [88]
Sylogos Pontion "Argonaftai-Komninoi" (Pontic Association "Argonaftai-Komninoi")	1943–1954	Chronika tou Pontou (Pontic Chronicles)	Folklore Magazine	Sylogos Pontion "Argonaftai-Komninoi" (Pontic Association "Argonaftai-Komninoi") [89]

surprise that it appears so frequently in the data. As a result, *tanomenon sorva* is listed first in Table 4. Soups were eaten for breakfast, especially during the winter, because of their nutritious and satisfying characteristics. *Tanomenon sorva* is similar to *Yayla Çorbası* (Meadow soup) and *Yoğurt/Yoğurtlu Çorba* (Yoghurt soup) eaten in different parts of Turkey (Ağrı, Antalya, Artvin, Bolu, Çorum, Düzce, Erzurum, Giresun, Kayseri, Konya, Malatya, Muş,) [100]. It may be cooked

with rice instead of coarsely ground wheat and topped with spearmint and thyme. Some of the other soups that were consumed included those made with snails, poultry, and beef, as well as lentils and beans with coarse cereals. The top three common dishes on this list are *tanomenon sorva*, *chavitz*, and *foustoron* (Fig. 9).

Table 5 includes the top 10 food products and food staples in descending order. Pre-baked pasta, dairy products, and foods that are produced through the

Table 4 The ten most common dishes in the publications, along with their recipes

No	Name of dishes	Recipe
1	Tanomenon Sorva	<p>Ingredients 1 cup wheat korkota/2 cups of paskitan/3 tablespoons butter/1 chopped onion/chopped spearmint/salt</p> <p>Procedure In a saucepan, boil the korkota with the appropriate salt. If the paskitan is too salty, do not add additional salt. After the korkota has boiled and become mushy, take 2–3 spoonfuls of the mixture with a wooden spoon and put it in a deep bowl. Let the mixture cool down a bit. Then dissolve the paskitan in the bowl with the korkota, making sure that it becomes a smooth porridge without any lumps. When the soup has cooled slightly, slowly add the paskitan mixture with the korkota into the pot, stirring constantly so that the paskitan is completely mixed. Then, heat the butter in a pan and sauté the onion along with a pinch of mint. Pour this into the pot and stir thoroughly</p>
2	Foustoron	<p>Ingredients 4 eggs/4 to 5 tablespoons of butter/salt</p> <p>Procedure In a large bowl, beat the eggs well and season with salt. Then, in a pan, brown the butter and fry the eggs on both sides until they are cooked through. On a flat plate, serve the foustoron hot and drizzle it with the melted butter. Bread should be served as a side. Many different ingredients can be used to make variations of this dish, such as onions, potatoes, anchovies, or cheese</p>
3	Chavitz	<p>Ingredients 1 tablespoon of fresh butter/5 glasses of water/1 tablespoon salt/<i>fourniko alevri</i> (Baked-roasted flour)</p> <p>Procedure Heat a tablespoon of butter in a saucepan, and then add about five glasses of water and a tablespoon of salt. Then gradually add the baked flour to the saucepan, stirring it constantly with a wooden spoon until it thickens and becomes creamy, and then the havitz is ready</p>
4	Pilav	<p>Ingredients Rice or bulgur/butter/salt/meat or chicken broth</p> <p>Procedure Add rice or bulgur to the meat broth in a pot. If the broth isn't salted, season it with extra salt. Let the rice cook until it has absorbed all the water, then remove it from the heat. This is followed by browning butter in a pan before pouring it over the pilaf. Rice or bulgur can be cooked in water if there is no meat or chicken broth</p>
5	Trimman	<p>Ingredients Wheat Flour/butter/onion</p> <p>Procedure Sprinkle water on a plate of wheat flour and rub it with your hands to form lumps. These are drained after being poured into boiling water containing oil. Then sauté them with butter and chopped onion</p>
6	Pisia	<p>Ingredients 1 kg of flour/1 tablespoon oil/salt/water/50 gr yeast</p> <p>Procedure Knead all the ingredients together to make a smooth and elastic dough. Let it rise and then divide it into small-sized balls. Flatten each ball of dough with your fingers and fry over medium heat until golden brown on both sides. Serve them hot, sprinkled with sugar, honey, or cheese</p>
7	Chasil	<p>Ingredients Water/korkota/salt/butter/milk, yogurt, or molasses</p> <p>Procedure In a pot, bring water to a boil with a little salt. After the water boils, add the cooked korkota until it looks like a pilaf. Then serve it on plates with a puddle in the middle of each plate. Then you fry butter and pour it into the puddle of each plate, and you eat the porridge by dipping your spoon into the puddle of melted butter. Chasil is eaten with milk, yogurt, or molasses, which is put on a separate plate</p>
8	Tzirichta	<p>Ingredients Wheat flour/yeast/salt/oil/honey or sugar</p> <p>Procedure Knead wheat flour with yeast and a pinch of salt and let the dough rise. Then take the dough by hand and form a small ball with a teaspoon and throw it into a pan with hot oil. The balls should turn brown. Tzirichta is eaten with honey or sugar</p>
9	Tzoumour	<p>Ingredients 1 stale bread/4–5 tablespoons butter/salt/1^{1/2} cup water</p> <p>Procedure Cut the bread into small pieces. Then melt the butter in a deep pan, and as soon as its aroma emerges, add salt and water. When it boils, add the pieces of bread to the pan and stir until fried, as soon as the tzoumour is ready. In some areas of Pontus, instead of water, you add 2–3 eggs to the browned butter, and after mixing them, you add the bread</p>

Table 4 (continued)

No	Name of dishes	Recipe
10	Siron	<p>Ingredients 1 cup wheat korkota/2 cups of paskitan/3 tablespoons butter/1 chopped onion/chopped spearmint/salt</p> <p>Procedure Knead wheat flour through and open pastry sheets (fillo) by baking on satz. Cut the fillo into strips about 1 inch wide, wrap the strips in rolls and place them upright in a baking tray. Then dissolve the paskitan in a small amount of water, add some smashed garlic, and pour it over the rolls after they have baked, covering them with a lid or another baking sheet to soften and puff up. The siron is then ready to serve by pouring melted butter over them</p>

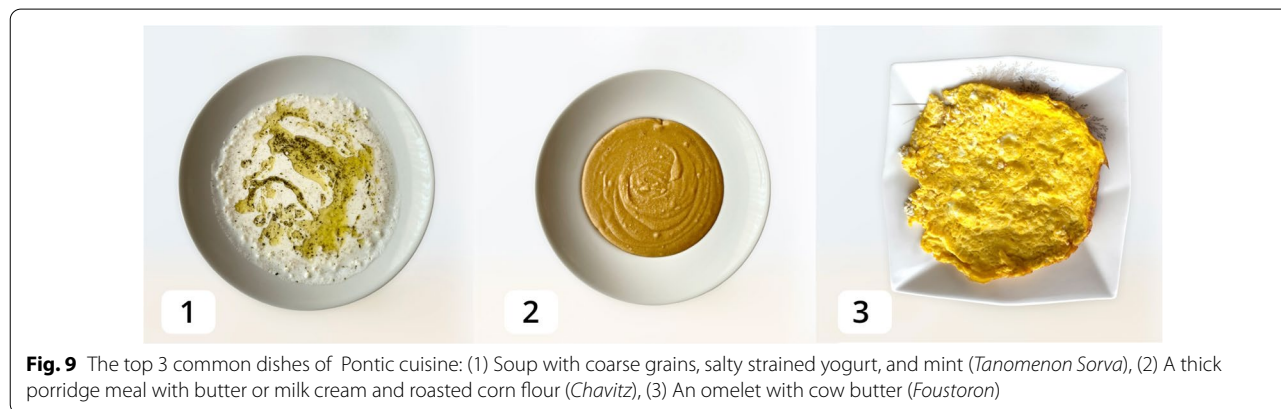


Table 5 The ten most common food products and staple foods in the publications

No	Name of food products	Name of foods
1	Pligouri (Bulgur)	Fasoulia (Beans)
2	Korkota (Coarsely ground grains)	Chapsia (Anchovies)
3	Makarina (Handmade dried pasta)	Mavrolachana (Kale)
4	Paskitan (Highly concentrated salty yoghurt)	Patates (Potatoes)
5	Voutoron or Vouturon (Cow Butter)	Kinteata (Nettle)
6	Kavourma (Sautéed meat dish)	Kochlidia (Snails)
7	Stypa (Pickles)	Lachana (White cabbage)
8	Tsortan (Dry myzithra)	Melitzanes (Eggplant)
9	Evriste (Pre-baked pasta)	Kreas (Meat)
10	Trachanas (A fermented cereal food)	Avloukia (Sorrel)

assertion that fermented dairy products, grains, and vegetables play an essential role in Pontic cuisine. The list of the most popular dishes includes delicacies like *chavitz*, *tanomenon sorva*, and *foustoron*, which were very popular in Pontus, even among contemporary descendants of Pontic Greeks living in Greece. Thus, the results for the most common dishes are consistent with the contents of all the publications. The same is observed with the frequency of reference to staple foods and food products, such as kale, beans, potatoes, greens, butter, *paskitan*, and yoghurt.

In fact, every reader who reads these books will get a complete picture of the way of life of the Greeks of Pontus that has been transmitted from generation to generation. Also, one can find that Pontic dishes are easy to cook, as they only require the use of a few ingredients and easy ways of preparation. Obviously, they may not resemble the dishes prepared in Pontus a century ago or even earlier, but they are certainly able to satisfy the feeling of reviving these traditional dishes, at least for those of Pontic descent.

Discussion

Today’s Greeks of Pontic heritage have mainly preserved aspects of their identity, such as dancing, dialect, music, customs, traditions, and diet. This is noteworthy as they did not have a geographical reference area, having lost all contact with their homeland. The Pontics’ collective identity stems not only from their common past, but also from the community’s common way of integration and relationship with the larger Greek society on an economic, cultural, and political level [101].

In both festive and everyday contexts, food is frequently associated with a sense of collective identity. Frequent gatherings of relatives are accompanied by meals and narratives that evoke memories, especially in older people, establishing food as a symbol of ethnic identity [39]. Kale with beans, various soups with yogurt and

Table 6 The twenty most used ingredients in cookbooks and cooking magazines

No	Name of Ingredients	Frequency	Relative frequency	Percentage frequency (%)
1	Butter	413	013430894	13.43
2	Flour	281	009138211	9.14
3	Eggs	194	006308943	6.31
4	Tomatoes	121	003934959	3.93
5	Milk	101	003284553	3.28
6	Bulgur	89	002894309	2.89
7	Cornflour	88	002861789	2.86
8	Cheese	85	002764228	2.76
9	Korkota	85	002764228	2.76
10	Yogurt	76	002471545	2.47
11	Chorta	66	002146341	2.15
12	Beans	66	002146341	2.15
13	Mincedmeat	65	002113821	2.11
14	Redpepper	62	00201626	2.02
15	Potatoes	58	001886179	1.89
16	Rice	54	001756098	1.76
17	Anchovies	49	001593496	1.59
18	Walnuts	48	001560976	1.56
19	Kale	35	001138211	1.14
20	Pumpkin	34	001105691	1.11

paskitan, *dolmades*, anchovies, pies, *tzirichta*, baklava, nuts, and other foods have been and are on the family's daily and festive table, at social events, on religious holidays, such as Christmas, and even at events of the local Pontian Cultural Associations. Apart from the second- and third-generation refugees, who have a more obvious and stronger link with the Pontic element, it appears that the fourth-generation refugees also prefer to consume certain Greek Pontic dishes, with the most popular being *tanomenon sorva*, *pisia*, *borscht*, and *havitz* [102]. Women, particularly mothers, grandmothers, and aunts, have a vital role in the transmission of tradition, memory, and history. On top of that, women are the primary decision-makers when it comes to deciding which traditional foods should be maintained and which newly available foods should be brought into their household [103]. They prepare the meals and cook the daily and festive foods, passing down practices and traditions. That seems to have unfolded in recent years [104]. Homemade food remains a vital symbol of the family, expressing family identity [105]. After all, identity is maintained through food in diaspora communities [106].

Food makes one feel at home in a new land [107]. The Pontic Greeks are feeling the same way as they defend the diversity of their cuisine in every way [39], regardless of the new trend toward healthier choices, which calls for using vegetable fats instead of butter, or the adoption of

other eating habits because of globalization and multiculturalism or dietary acculturation [108], particularly in urban environments. Maybe that happened because their ancestors' gastronomic culture was left behind and remained with them symbolically rather than through a complete transplant of customary practices [109]. Although it is becoming increasingly popular in contemporary Greece, this regional cuisine continues to be largely absent from the official discourse, and there is a general lack of awareness of its distinctive characteristics [110]. This is supported, among other aspects, by the absence of social life for Pontic Cuisine [78] and the lessened interest in it among ethnologists in terms of ethnographic research [110].

The outcomes of this research show that the cookbooks and cookery magazines adhere to the philosophy of the traditional cuisine of the Greeks of Pontus, as established by literature and oral tradition. These publications can be recognized as elements in the promotion and transmission of Pontus' culinary tradition. Cookbooks are essential for disseminating traditional food knowledge [111]. Furthermore, cookbooks not only reinforce culinary traditions but also aid in the preservation of memories [112]. Since traditional food knowledge is a traditional practice of passing down food, recipes, cooking techniques, and expertise from

generation to generation [113], these cookbooks are an excellent way of passing down this knowledge intergenerationally, as they are largely descended from Pontic Greek ancestors.

Conclusion

Greek Pontic cuisine is a unique and fascinating local cuisine found in the northern part of Greece. Culinary traditions have played an integral role in the preservation of Greek Pontic identity. One way of preserving and transmitting these culinary traditions is by oral tradition. This tradition can be passed down through cookbooks. These books, however, should not include a typical recipe record because just recording the ingredients and the preparation process is pointless. Interpreting recipes includes searching beyond the words and exploring whether recipes communicate moods, experiences, and emotions. After this, recipes gain symbolic meaning, placing food and culinary traditions at the foundation of the social formation of identity. Only then may cookbooks evoke the continuity and nostalgia of migrant families and their lost homelands. It is possible that cookbooks devoted to Pontic cuisine may be used to convey a genuine, traditional gastronomic culture to the Pontic Greeks in the future. An anthropological approach to books, on the other hand, could provide a definitive solution to the concerns above. Anyway, food culture is best explained via cookbooks, as recipes serve as a repository of cultural memory.

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All the food and ingredient names italicized in this article are in the Greek Pontic dialect. The wild greens are identified by their scientific names, which are in italics and enclosed in parenthesis. In addition, meals, ingredients, and recipes have been translated into English or have been given a brief description in parentheses.

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