
*STRATEGY IN TRADITIONAL RESTAURANTS.
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF MENUS AT
FOOD SERVICE OUTLETS*

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ABSTRACT

Background: By the registration and analysis of the Greek menus, by the finding of the menus' important features, and by the analysis of the menu-items that more frequently appear in Greek catering businesses, we can have the profile of the typical menu in a Greek restaurant, for historical, traditional and nutritional researching purposes.

Methods: On the whole, 502 menus out of 502 catering businesses were chosen throughout Greece. The research was divided into six parts, which concern the registration and the analysis of the names of the businesses, the different types of the businesses that took part in the study, the menu-categories and the menu-items, the nutritional and gastronomical comments on some of the most frequently appearing menu-items and finally, the creation of the profile of a typical menu.

Results: Some of the most important results are that 600 single words derive from the names of the businesses, 489 different words that compose the menu-categories. From the results of the menu-items' analysis, 2033 single words were appeared. The 10 most common of them, which describe dishes are: feta cheese (934 occurrences), shrimps (703), mushrooms (702), fried cheese (saganaki) (595), burger (570), souvlaki (535), octopus (409), sausage (395), Greek salad (choriatiki) (391) and wine (382). 22 menu-items, 3 alcohol drinks and 3 desserts, were chosen in order to be commented.

Conclusion: The current study could improve the procedures of writing a menu, as an important process of the Ho.Re.Ca. Sector. The catering businesses show variety in the businesses names, but they seem to keep a specific strategy on writing a menu, such as specific word profile and menu-categories number. Furthermore, it is interesting that some elements and menu-items, from foreign cuisines, seem to have been deeply embedded in the Greek gastronomy. Additionally, it seems that dishes with meat maintain a great percentage on a menu. Eventually, a model profile of the Greek menu was created upon the afore mentioned data analysis. However, more research in this topic is recommended, by taking into consideration some other aspects of this one.

Key Words: menu, menu-item, dish, restaurant, gastronomy

INTRODUCTION

Tavern; The traditional Greek restaurant

There are many different definitions that explain the word "Tavern". It is the restaurant that usually offers cheap food, meat or fish and wine (Iordanidou, 2007). Otherwise, tavern is a small Greek restaurant or café (Simpson & Weiner, 2012).

The origin of the tavern appears 2500 years ago. It was first appeared in the Ancient Athina with the name of "kapilio" or as an inn. The definition of "tavern" first used on the 13th centuries in Istanbul with the beginning of the Frankish (Pittas, 2009). Taverns and inns had an important role in the History of Culture, because they were used as way of the society's relief (Lundberg, 1997). In general, the Greek tavern changed throughout the decades, in parallel with the historical changes in Greece and particularly in Athens (Pittas, 2009).

Tavern is divided into several categories. Fish-taverns offer fish dishes usually accompanied with alcohol drinks. Grill houses offer meat or chicken dishes accompanied or not with drinks. Souvlaki-taverns roast small pieces of meat in order to prepare the typical Greek souvlaki (Laloumis & Stefanakidis, 2005).

A usual tavern menu consists of:

Bread (usually sliced), salads (most frequently Greek salad or seasonal greens), meze or appetizers (such as: tzatziki, dolma, spinach pie, saganaki-fried cheese), pulses, spaghettis, fish and seafood, cooked dishes, grilled dishes, wine, beers, other alcohol drinks, such as ouzo and tsipouro, seasonal fruits and desserts (such as yogurt with honey, preserves sweet, halva).

There are some trademarks and certifications, for the quality assurance of the quality of Greek

Cuisine in catering businesses and of general rendering of services; “Greek Cuisine” trademark of the GNTO¹, “Cretan Cuisine Quality” trademark, “Gourmet” award, “Golden Chef’s Hat” award (Boskou & Palisidis, 2012).



Picture 1: "Greek Cuisine" trademark, "Cretan Cuisine Quality" trademark, "Gourmet" award, "Golden Chef's Hat" award

As it is mentioned above, tavern is the traditional restaurant of Greece. Respectively, “konoba” is the Croatian traditional restaurant, “osteria” and “trattoria” are the Italian traditional ones, “tapas bars” and “el restaurantes” are the Spanish traditional ones and “brasserie” and “roisserie” are the French traditional ones.

The role of taverns in Greek tourism

Tourism is a very widespread way of entertainment, as well as a part of a big industry and an important financial source for traditionally tourist countries, such as France, Spain, America, Italy, Cuba and Greece (Boskou & Palisidis, 2012). Food is an important tourist attraction in an assortment of forms and enhances or is central to the visitor experience. It has assumed a prominent role in tourist decision-making and satisfaction, tourism products and place promotion strategies. As such, it can be a useful instrument of destination and

¹GNTO: Greek National Tourism Organization

general development. Tourists and the tourism industry around the world thus share an interest in food, although certain concerns must be addressed to ensure visitor expectations are met and perhaps exceeded (Henderson, 2009). Food and tourism have a very close relationship and food is a critical tourism resource (Quan & Wang, 2004; Henderson, 2009). It is vital for physical sustenance and all tourists have to eat when travelling. But food can be a major draw and primary motivator for some, which satisfies a multiplicity of physiological and other needs and wants (Tikkanen, 2007; Henderson, 2009). With regard to benefits, food offers pleasure and entertainment and serves a social purpose. Dining habits can also afford insights into ways of life (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Henderson, 2009) helping tourists understand differences between their own culture and those with which they come into contact (Hegarty & O'Mahoney, 2001; Henderson, 2009).

In Greece, tourism contributes to the local economy, providing 15% of the GDP². There are more than 9700 hotel establishments and 115000 catering businesses, thus the tourist Sector is one of the major financial sources for Greece (SETE, 2011). Tourists come in contact with Greek cuisine throughout hotels, and afterwards throughout Greek restaurants and taverns.

Taverns prepare meals from mediterranean ingredients. The Mediterranean Diet based on simple food preparation, offers delicious dishes because of the wide range of mediterranean products (Willett *et al*, 1995). Hence, Greek tavern is an integral part of a tourist visit in Greece.

Studies Review

In recent years, many research has been conducted, concerning outdoor food consumption. In fact, food consumption in restaurants and other catering businesses seems to have been increased later (Kant & Graubard, 2004; Horizons FS Limited, 2012). The increased outdoor food and fast-food consumption is associated with an increase in obesity percentage, because of the high-calorie meals that the food catering businesses usually offers (Lachat *et al*, 2011; Bezerra *et al*, 2012). As far as the menus' content are concerning, it seems that when businessmen design their menu-pricelist, they give priority to the profit margins than to health and nutritional issues (Granz *et al*, 2007). In another research, they studied the energy and nutritional content of some menus of a food chain restaurant. The results indicated that appetizers had more energy, fat and sodium than all other item types. The majority of main entrees fell below one-third of the US Department of Agriculture's estimated daily energy needs, but as few as 3% were also within limits for sodium, fat and saturated fat (Wu & Sturm, 2012).

² Gross Domestic Product

Necessity and Purpose of the research

As a result from the above bibliography and studies review, there is a need to analyze the menus of the traditional Greek restaurants for two main reasons. A menu represents an important part of a business' profile and operation, thus it is important to study the features and key-points that businessmen give priority to when designing a menu. From these results we can have an idea about what customers need from a food menu, because of the Supply-Demand Law. Hence, we can come to a conclusion about the potential outdoor food choices of the Greek, that this concerns the Science of Nutrition, as well the potential food choices of tourists, that this concerns the Tourism Industry and the Ho.Re.Ca. Sector.

The aim of the research is the registration and the analysis of the Greek menus. Particularly, we registered and analyzed the menus into menu-categories, as well as we analyzed the menus into menu-items. By the registration of the menus, by the finding of the menus' important features and the results of the analysis of menu-categories and menu-items that most frequently appeared, we can have the profile of the typical menu in a Greek restaurant, for historical, traditional and nutritional researching purposes.

METHODS

Selection Criteria

For the current research, we collected data with some criteria. We choose catering businesses that:

- I. Are Greek firms
- II. Have typical Greek Cuisine and Greek dishes. Ethnic restaurants, pizzeria, fast-food restaurants and fast-food chain restaurants, souvlaki restaurants, grill houses and creperies are not included.
- III. Coffeeshops and bars that do not offer any kind of meals are not included. On the contrary, café-restaurants, snak-bars and wine-bars are included in the sample.
- IV. The full menu-pricelist is available to us. We do not include menus that are not completed.
- V. Their menu is available at least in Greek language. Menus of Greek restaurants that are not available in Greek are not included.
- VI. Have fixed a la carte menu. Table d'hote menus, buffet menus and restaurants without a fixed menu are not included.
- VII. Coffeeshops and bars that do not offer any kind of meals are not included.

As far as

We selected our data from the Internet, from business sites, web pages related to catering businesses and web pages with special offers for restaurants and catering businesses in general. Also, we select data directly from businessmen, either by asking the menu by email or by taking photos and copies of the menus.

We collected data throughout Greece. The number of the selection data in each prefecture is mentioned below:

Evrou	3	Larissa	26
Rodopi	1	Magnisia	6
Ksanthi	8	Euritania	0
Kavala	29	Aitoloakarnania	1
Drama	6	Fthiotida	7
Serres	8	Fokida	10
Thessaloniki	18	Viotia	3
Halkidiki	20	Evia	0
Kilki	1	Attica	70
Pellas	2	Korinthos	3
Imathia	5	Argolida	47
Florina	6	Achaia	20
Kastoria	21	Ilia	15
Kozani	4	Arkadia	3
Pieria	15	Lakonia	5
Grevenon	5	Messinia	6
Ioanninon	6	Cyclades	42

Thesprotia	1	Lesvos	3
Corfu	2	Chios	3
Leukada	2	Samos	5
Keffalinia	1	Dodekanisou	7
Zante	0	Lasithi	6
Preveza	3	Heraklion	3
Trikalon	11	Rethimno	7
Arta	3	Chania	2
Karditsa	1		

Table 1: Number of the selection data in each prefecture in Greece.

The final sample consists of 502 menus out of 502 catering businesses throughout Greece.

Analysis of the data

The programs, which are used for the analysis of the data, are: Excel (MS Office), Calc (Open Office) and Online Text Analyzer, a java application from the <http://www.online-utility.org/text/analyzer.jsp> website. The last one can analyze a text into the frequency that each work of the text appears in it. It also analyzes a text into 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 word phrases that appear most frequently. The results of the Online Text Analyzer are presented into tables, for each number of word phrases, separately.

Firstly, businesses names are analyzed by the Online Text Analyzer, in order to find which words are usually used for a Greek catering business name. To continue with, we analyze the businesses categories that took part in the research, in order to have participation's percentage for each business category. The analysis is conducted with filters of Excel Sheet of MS Office. Then, we analyze the menus into menu-categories. We first put the data into an Excel Sheet: we register the business' name, the city or town the prefecture that each establishment is located, the number of menu-categories that each menu obtains and the menu-categories of each one, particularly, in order to be analyzed. We made arithmetic analysis of the number of menu-categories that the menus obtain, by using

Excel Sheet of the MS Office. The next analysis has to do with the characterization of the profile of the words that are used for the menu-categories. 17 different word characterizations were used. Thereafter, the menu-categories are analyzed according to special categories, such as “regimen” category. The language of the words of menu-categories is also registered. Then, a two-word combination is made between the words that appear most frequently in menu-categories titles, in order to find the probability to appear together on a menu.

In the next part, the menu-items of menus are analyzed by Online Text Analyzer. Some spelling and syntax correction, as well as replacements of words with the same meaning, were necessary in order to be finally analyzed. The initial word number is 10481 words, but because of the dish-codification, the final one is 9996 words. The final sample of the menu-items is a Word Sheet of 558 pages.

From the last analysis, the most frequently appeared dishes come off. Some of them are commented nutritionally and gastronomically. Finally, the most frequently appeared menu-categories and menu-items are used to design the typical Greek menu.

Results

Most common name for a catering business is “steki” that means «hang out», with 8 appearances. Other common names are “geuseis” that means «flavors», “maistrali” that means «mild wind», “petrino” that means «stony» and “acrogiali” that means «seashore», with 4 appearances. Also, the word “hotel” appears 7 times, which means that businessmen give special name indication concerning hotle restaurants. Finally, 600 name words come out of 502 businesses in total, which explains that there is variety throughout businesses names. Businesses names, which appear more than 3 times, are mentioned below:

<u>Order</u>	<u>Words</u>	<u>Appear.</u>
1.	το	55
2.	ο	36
3.	restaurant	25
4.	η	16
5.	τα	15

6.	του	10
7.	στέκι	8
8.	της	8
9.	ταβέρνα	8
10.	εστιατόριο	8
11.	και	7
12.	hotel	7
13.	ουζερί	5
14.	μας	5
15.	taverna	4
16.	la	4
17.	στο	4
18.	γεύσεις	4
19.	μαϊστράλι	4
20.	πέτρινο	4
21.	ακρογιάλι	4
22.	η'	3
23.	φάρος	3
24.	thalassa	3
25.	κουζίνα	3
26.	κληματαριά	3

27.	bar	3
28.	and	3
29.	golden	3

Table 2: Businesses names results

35 different businesses categories derive from the research. It is important to mention that the typification of the business category was made by each businessman themselves. 171 out of 502 businesses are characterized as “restaurants” and 148 out of 502 are characterized as “taverns”.

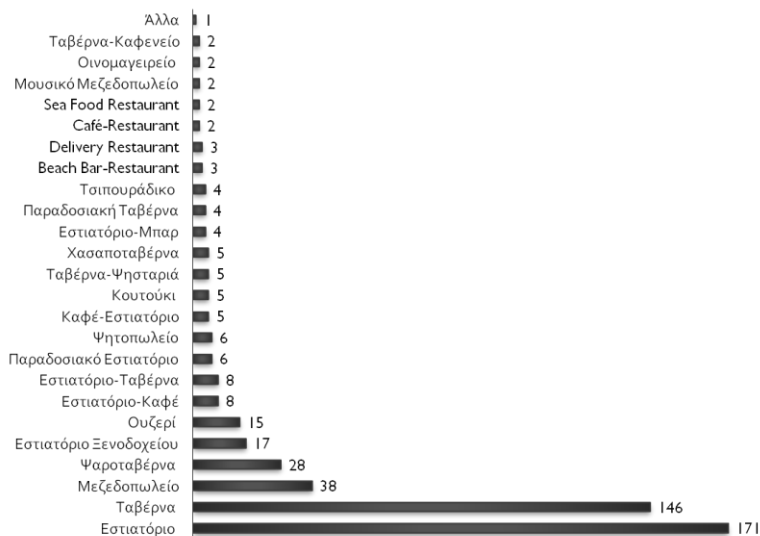


Figure 1: Businesses categories results

It is important to keep in mind that, businesses categories results, possibly, influence menu-items results.

The results of the most appeared menu-categories are below. This table consists of the results that have more than 20 appearances into the sample.

Or.	Words	App.			
1.	appetizers	469	27.	white	55
2.	salads	455	28.	cold	48
3.	wines	232	29.	warm	44
4.	refreshments	189	30.	meats	42
5.	dishes	166	31.	rouge	38
6.	beers	149	32.	pasta	36
7.	desserts	142	33.	cooked in oil	35
8.	of (her)	140	34.	tsipouro	34
9.	seafood	140	35.	risotto	33
10.	cheese	123	36.	cuisine	31
11.	cooked to order	118	37.	of the day	30
12.	drinks (pota)	118	38.	wine	29
13.	fish	111	39.	specialties	29
14.	spaghetti	106	40.	pizzas	28
15.	entrees	101	41.	retsines	27
16.	sweets	95	42.	varieties	27
17.	grilled	88	43.	for	26
18.	ouzo	78	44.	us	25
19.	and	75	45.	pies	24

20.	cooked	70	46.	fresh	24
21.	soups	67	47.	omelets	22
22.	meat food	65	48.	spit	22
23.	coffees	64	49.	carbons	20
24.	meze	59	50.	fried	20
25.	roasted	56	51.	drinks (rofimata)	20
26.	red	55	52.	special	20

Table 3: Frequency of menu-categories

In total, 489 different words results from the menu-categories analysis. 243 out of 489 words appear more than 2 times in the sample.

<u>Number of Categories</u>	<u>Number of menus with the particular number of categories</u>
6	60
5	58
4	57
7	52
8	46
3	41
9	33
10	31

11	29
13	23
14	14
12	11
16	10
15	8
21	5
19	5
17	5
2	5
23	3
20	3
24	2
18	1

Table 4: Results of the arithmetic analysis

As far as the arithmetic results are concerned, the minimum number is 2 categories and the maximum one is 24 categories. 80%, of the menus, consists of 3 to 11 categories. On the other hand, 20%, of the menus, consists of: 2, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24.

The characterization of the profile's words, that consist the menu-categories, is completed in 17 different ways. Finally, the main percentage of the word-profile was characterized as «categories» (38.2%) and the second biggest one as «subcategories» (26.6%).

Order	Categorization	Appearances	Percentage
1.	category	232	38.1579
2.	subcategory	162	26.6447
3.	characterization	75	12.3355
4.	dish	57	9.3750
5.	drink	17	2.7961
6.	clause	14	2.3026
7.	adverb	10	1.6447
8.	verb	9	1.4803
9.	quantity	7	1.1513
10.	drink	5	0.8224
11.	location	4	0.6579
12.	number	3	0.4934
13.	conjunction	3	0.4934
14.	preposition	3	0.4934
15.	pronoun	3	0.4934
16.	letter	3	0.4934
17.	ingredient	1	0.1645

Table 5: Results of word profile analysis

Special categories results indicate that Greek businesses seem to rarely offer these kinds of food- categories. To be more specific, only 1.6% out of 502 menus has a special category as well as 8 words out of 489 consist a special one.

<u>Special Categories</u>	<u>Appear. Number</u>
Regimen	2
Diabetic	1
Fasting	2
Vegetarian	3

Table 6: Special Category Results

The majority of the words that are used in menu-categories have Greek origin (87.1%). However, there is an important percentage of other language on the origin of some words (12.9%). It seems that is quite usual to use foreign words in Greek menus.

Order	Word Language	Appearances	Percentage
1.	Greek	426	87.1166
2.	other	63	12.8834

Table 7: Language of menu-categories

From the law of averages, the combination of «salads-appetizers» and «appetizers-salads» have the biggest probability to appear together in a menu-category-title (0.68% percentage).

As far as the menu-items are concerned, the most common ones are appeared below:

feta cheese	934	sauce (with..)	264	vinegar	150	broccolli	113
shrimps	703	olives	257	tomato sauce	149	with honey	113
mushrooms	702	pork chop	249	oregano	148	dolma	112

fried cheese	595	spaghetti	248	salmon	148	with cheese	108
beef steak	570	cola	244	shrimps fried cheese	148	with ice cream	106
souvlaki	535	squid	233	patatosalata	143	grilled	105
octopus	409	meat balls	230	risotto	143	salad (with..)	103
sausage	395	from tomato	228	fava	143	virgin olive oil	102
choriatiki	391	anchovy	227	with sauce	140	(cooked) in the oven	99
wine	382	coca cola	225	kebab	138	chef's salad	92
tzatziki	352	Greek salad	200	sardine	138	staffed with	87
French fries	345	florina	167	baked cheese feta	138	fried zucchini	87
Chicken fillet	341	chicken with	166	sepia	130	with tomato	85
tenderloin	332	pork souvlaki	163	moussaka	122	chef's	84
with sauce	324	beef steak	162	hooch	121	with mushrooms	81
ouzo	310	tsipouro	160	ntakos	119	with sauce from	81
zucchini	300	tirokafteri	160	butter bean	116	salad of	79
mussels	297	aggourotomata	157	sour cream	116	salt pepper	70
greens	294	cod	157	swordfish	115	chop pork chop	63
ribs	291	tomato and	154	taramosalata	115	beef steak staffed	52

veal (chop)	279	chicken souvlaki	153	zucchini balls	114	pork chop veal	52
lamb	267	barbecued	152	orange juice	114	a la crem	51
ice creams	265	braised	151	soda	114	yogurt with honey	51
						pork chop veal chop	50

Table 8: Most common menu-items

The above results are mentioned to the one word results that appear more than 110 times and to the 2, 3, 4 word phrase results that appear more than 50 times (according to Greek words results).

According to the above mentioned results, 22 dishes, 3 Greek alcohol drink and 3 desserts are chosen and commented nutritionally and gastronomically.

Creation of the typical Greek menu

According to results of the research, the indicated menu-category number is 6 categories, because the greater percentage of the menus obtains this number. We choose the 10 first results of menu-categories and we combined them into pairs. Finally, we create 6 menu-categories for the typical menu. However, it is necessary to add the “drink” category in the “refreshments-beers” one. To continue with, we decided to include single word dishes and 2, 3, 4 word phrase dishes that appear more than 50 times and desserts with over than 30 appearances. We do not include the “fish” category because it is not a priority according to results, but it is a necessary category when we refer to fish-tavern. The Typical Menu is presented to a lesser order:

Conclusion

The registration and analysis of the Greek menus interests the Greek Tourism Sector. In this research, we study the Indirect Demand. Lots of similar researches could be conducted in order to study the Law of Supply-Demand and to improve the writing processes of menu, which is an important marketing part of a catering business. Nowadays, menu is more important than before, especially for businesses that have websites. In this case, customers firstly come into contact with the menu and afterwards with the space of restaurants and the staff. Also, throughout this study, we end up to some

probable outdoor nutritional choices for Greeks. This part of the study has a great scientific interest for the Science of Nutrition.

Appetizers-Salads:

Feta cheese
Mushrooms
Saganaki
Octopus
Sausage
Tzatziki
French fries
Mussels
Olives
Meatballs
Anchovy
Cuttlefish
Skordalia
Graviera
Tigania
Kefalotiri
Florina
Tirokafteri
Shrimps fried cheese
Risotto
Fava
Sardines
Sepia
Ntakos
Butter beans
Zucchini balls
Dolma
Cheese pie
Kaseri
Livers
Cheese croquettes
Mashed potatoes
Mushrooms

Bougourdi
Fried zucchini
Beans
Scampi
Omelet
Bekri (meze)
Tuna
Bourekakia
Mullet
Green beans
Smelt
Soup
Flogeres
Fish-soup
Toursi
Choriatiki
Greens
Eggplant salad
Beet salad
Lettuce salad
Aggouro-tomata
Potato salad
Tarama salad
Broccoli
Tuna salad
Chef's salad
Caesar's
Cheese salad
Cauliflower salad
Coleslaw
Russian

Cooked to order:

Beef steak
Ribs
Pork chop
Cuttlefish
Pancetta
Souvlaki pork
Veal chop
Souvlaki chicken
Haddock
Kebab
Hooch
Swordfish
Gyro
Kontosouvli
Barbel
Bass fish
Mackerel
Kokoretsi
Sole
Tope
Sea bream

Main dishes:

Chicken fillet
Ten derloin
Lamb
Pasta
Meatballs
Schnitzel
Soutzoukakia
Red meat
Salmon
Moussaka
Carbonara
Stifado
Napolitana
Giouvetsi
Lobster
Pasticcio
Pesto
Pizza
Cockerel
Bolognese
goat
Shrimp spaghetti
Rabbit
Mpriam
Gumbo
Soufle

Refreshments-Beers-Drinks:

Cola
coca cola
Orange juice
Soda
Sprite
Lemon juice
fanta.

Heineken
Amstel
Kaiser
Mythos
fix

Ouzo
Tsipouro

Wines:

wine (white-red-rouge)
retsina

Desserts:

Ice-creams
Halva
Yogurt with honey
Pecan pie
Kadafi
Baklavas
Panacotta
Ravani
Crepa
Fruit salad
Mousse
Custard filled pastry
Sweet preserves
Millefeuille

To be concluded, businessmen use a variety of words for their businesses names, which is also a marketing part of a business. Also, 80% of the menus have 3 to 11 menu-categories, a limited number, maybe in order to facilitate customers' choices. Furthermore, the main language of a catering business' menu is Greek. There is a small but remarkable tendency for foreign languages to embed into Greek gastronomy. As far as special categories are concerned, regimen, diabetics, vegetarian and fasting categories are the great minority of them. That may be cause there is a limited demand for that kind of categories, or else businessmen do not want to invest money in order for this categories to be included in the menus.

Results, from menu-items, reveal some interesting key-points for a catering business. In the first 80 words, we can find 16 red meat dishes, 7 fish and 6 seafood ones. This could play an important role on how much Greek people prefer red meat than other kind of animal protein. Moreover, in the first 80 dishes, we find 10 salads and specifically Choriatiiki (Greek salad), greens, egg plant sauce, beet salad, lettuce salad, cucumber-tomato salad, potato salad, broccoli salad, tuna salad, ceasar's. In the first 80 words, the alcohol drink that appears most frequently is wine, followed by ouzo, tsipouro, beer and retsina. The most frequently appeared dessert is ice-cream, followed by halva and yogurt with honey, as well as the most frequently appeared coffee is espresso, followed by cappuccino and frappe. Greek coffee appears significantly fewer times than espresso. Finally, we have to underline that in the first 120 dishes, we find 11 ethnic foods (Turkish, Italian, American, and Russian). It seems that there are many foreign elements that have been penetrated into Greek gastronomy.

Limitations

Data Analysis Program: "Online Text Analyzer" could be replaced from another tool that will not create confusion of certain single words. Because of that, we may have interpreted wrongfully some dishes. However, we corrected the confusion to a great extent by using the 2, 3, 4, 5 word phrase tables of the Program. Furthermore, the different business categories do not equally take part in the research. This might have influence some results, especially for the most frequency appeared menu-items. Finally, we missed some data, because of the exclusion of Greek catering businesses that were available only in foreign languages. We recommend further research in this topic, taking into consideration all the limitations that have mentioned.

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