

PHĀEA GASTRONOMY - OVERVIEW

At PHĀEA, honoring Cretan traditions is not just a philosophy—it is a way of life. From personalized dining experiences to immersive workshops and conscious initiatives, guests are invited to explore the flavors, scents, and landscapes of Crete through a fresh and deeply authentic perspective.

Gastronomy lies at the heart of Cretan culture, woven into its history and heritage. Here, flavors are more than ingredients; they are stories—living narratives of the island's past and present. The dining table is a sacred gathering place, where meals are not simply consumed but celebrated, fostering connections that span generations.

Crete's rugged terrain, sun-drenched climate, and fertile lands yield some of the world's most coveted ingredients—from its liquid gold extra virgin olive oil to wild seasonal greens and aromatic mountain herbs. These elements are the soul of Cretan cuisine, transforming every meal into a sensory experience that is both deeply rooted in tradition and effortlessly contemporary.

At PHĀEA, artisanal food is a celebration of Crete's bounty, but more importantly, it is a commitment—to sustainability, cultural preservation, and nourishment as a pillar of wellbeing. Here, the focus is not only on what is served, but on how each ingredient is cultivated, prepared, and shared—ensuring that every bite tells a story of place, purpose, and passion.

A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

At the heart of PHĀEA's philosophy lies a commitment to sustainability that extends beyond taste—a guiding principle that shapes every aspect of the culinary experience.

Through hands-on experiences like the PHĀEA Farmers Feast, guests connect with the land by handpicking produce from the 2,568m² of certified organic gardens, before savoring dishes crafted from 12.7 tons of fresh, locally grown ingredients. 85% of the total extra virgin olive oil used in meals is sourced from the PHĀEA Farmers program, a testament to the brand's dedication to responsible sourcing and regenerative agriculture.

Sustainability is not an afterthought—it is the foundation of PHĀEA's daily operations, seamlessly integrated into practices, initiatives, and actions that place both guests and the environment at the center. From honoring local traditions and actively supporting the community to fostering a culture of respect for the land and its people, every effort is made to minimize ecological impact while preserving the integrity of Cretan gastronomy. The goal is simple: to ensure that each dish is a reflection of the season's freshest flavors, prepared with care, rooted in tradition, and served with purpose.

Some examples include:

One standout initiative is **PHĀEA Plan Bee**, a pioneering project dedicated to supporting pollinators—particularly bees, the silent guardians of biodiversity. At PHĀEA Blue, lush gardens and abundant water sources have transformed the landscape into a thriving sanctuary for these essential creatures, ensuring a flourishing ecosystem. PHĀEA Plan Bee fosters awareness and appreciation for the delicate balance between nature and nourishment.

The **PHĀEA Farmers Program** is a pioneering initiative that empowers resort staff to cultivate the land during the off-season, providing them with the resources, agricultural training, and support needed to grow crops using environmentally responsible techniques. By fostering a deeper connection between employees, the land, and the local community, PHĀEA not only ensures access to the highest-quality local produce but also creates a sustainable ecosystem that benefits all—staff, guests, and the island itself.

More than just a sourcing initiative, PHĀEA Farmers Program is a model of circular sustainability, where the time, love, and labor invested in Crete's fertile land directly enhance the culinary experiences within the resorts. As the program evolves, it continues to offer guests a meaningful and immersive way to engage with Crete's agricultural traditions, from farm-to-table experiences to hands-on participation in seasonal activities. Under the guidance of a Phāea farmer, guests harvest the ingredients for an exclusive, two-hour [Phāea Farmers' Feast](#). Participants will pick vegetables from the organic gardens and the executive chef will then guide them through the preparation of a feast, paired with organic wines, in a beautiful garden setting and a live showcase of traditional cheesemaking. More than just a chance to get back to the land and sharpen their cooking skills, the Feast also offers guests the opportunity to experience the Cretan lifestyle.

Sustainability in Action: By the Numbers

- 24 tonnes of organic waste composted and a 50% reduction in landfill waste compared to 2022
- 2,568m² of certified organic gardens, producing 2,334kg of seasonal vegetables and herbs
- 99% of fruits, 84% of vegetables are fresh, with 38% sourced directly from local producers
- 9,530kg of PHĀEA Olive Oil produced in 2023, representing 85% of the extra virgin olive oil used in the resorts' kitchens
- 47% of the honey used at the hotels is sourced from local beekeepers, ensuring pure, natural flavors that honor Crete's rich terroir

IMMERSIVE GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCES

At PHĀEA, dining is more than a celebration of the Mediterranean diet—it is an invitation to explore, engage, and connect. Guests are encouraged to unlock the full nutritional potential of each ingredient, discover Crete's seasonal bounty, and meet the people whose hands preserve the island's culinary traditions.

Through a series of immersive experiences, visitors can delve deeper into Crete's agricultural and gastronomic heritage—whether it's through wine tours, hands-on tastings, fishing trips, or open-air barbecues aboard a private caique, each moment is designed to honor the rich cultural fabric of the island.

PHĀEA Farmers Feast: The True Taste of Crete

A celebration of the farm-to-table ethos, this experience takes place amidst the organic gardens, where guests handpick the freshest seasonal produce alongside a PHĀEA Farmer and PHĀEA Blue's Executive Chef, Giannis Kalivretakis. As the aromas of wood-fired cooking fill the air, visitors gather around a communal table, embodying the warmth and convivial spirit of Cretan familial bonds.

This feast also revives an age-old technique—Earth Cooking, where the land itself becomes the kitchen. Inspired by ancient Cretan traditions, this method allows ingredients to slow-cook beneath the soil, enhancing

their depth of flavor and preserving their natural richness—a culinary ritual that pays homage to the past while nourishing the present.

Garden Tours: A Living Landscape

For over 40 years, the resort's gardens have flourished under Crete's sun-drenched skies and fertile soil, evolving into a botanical sanctuary of fragrant flowers, indigenous plants, and aromatic herbs. At PHĀEA Cretan Malia, guests are invited to embark on a sensory journey, exploring Crete's floral heritage alongside the head gardener.

In addition to guided tours, the resort hosts environmental workshops and conservation initiatives—including recycling programs and coastal cleanups—as part of PHĀEA's commitment to preserving the island's unspoiled beauty.

Wine Tasting: A Tribute to the Vineyards of Crete

The art of winemaking in Crete is a profound expression of the island's soul—where vineyards weave through the landscape like a living tapestry of history and craftsmanship.

Within the resort's organic gardens, a charming wooden picnic table awaits—a setting where guests can savor the most distinguished Greek and Cretan wine varieties, guided by an expert sommelier. Each sip offers a taste of Crete's terroir, celebrating the centuries-old winemaking techniques that have shaped the island's viticultural identity.

Kafenio: A Taste of Timeless Tradition

Step into Kafenio, a cherished corner of Greek café culture, where time slows, conversations flow, and tradition is brewed to perfection. Here, guests can experience the ritual of Greek coffee prepared in hot sand ('hovoli')—an age-old technique that enhances its bold aroma and velvety texture.

Beyond coffee, Kafenio invites visitors to pause for a shot of raki, engage in lively conversation, and embrace a way of life where the local community comes alive—a moment of simple pleasure, steeped in tradition.

Mitato: Traditional Cretan Hut Experiences

The newly-built Mitato, is an extraordinary space inspired by the traditional Cretan shelters known as 'Mitato'. These huts, historically constructed from locally gathered stones, served as shelters for shepherds and were integral to the art of cheese-making. At Village Heights, the Mitato pays homage to this rich architectural heritage, blending the raw beauty of austere functionality with modern comfort.

At this versatile space guests can learn about the local cuisine and find out how the 'Tyrozouli' Cheese is made, whilst tasting a selection of local cheeses and beer varieties. Additionally, they can participate in traditional cooking classes learning authentic Cretan recipes, explore unique local wines through wine-tastings or book an intimate dining experience with a bespoke Minoan Culinary menu.

Around the Mitato area, guests are also able to explore the vibrant organic gardens and discover local herbs, fruits and vegetables whilst learning about the traditional Cretan farming methods, with an emphasis on sustainability.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE THE HOTELS

At the heart of PHĀEA's immersive approach is a dedication to curating and sharing authentic local knowledge. Whether uncovering the secrets of East Crete's remote villages, exploring ancient olive groves, or learning the art of traditional Cretan cooking, these experiences offer travelers a deeper, more thoughtful engagement with Greece.

The Island's Best Kept Secret - Cretan Wines: Archarnes village, at the heart of Crete's wine heritage offers a true taste of the island's terroir. A guided tour under the shaded ancient olive trees, at Lyrarakis winery, is an intoxicating journey into the rich winemaking heritage of Crete and its unique varieties.

Discover the art of Bread & iconic Cretan Rusk Baking at Kroustas: Bread is so much more than the pleasure of eating it. It carries the stories of cultures from the past until the present day. Ten minutes away from Agios Nikolaos town, visitors can discover the allure of 'eptazyma rusks' – the famous Cretan bites with a long tradition. Antonis - a former hotel manager - grew up in the village of Kroustas, which boasts a long tradition in bread baking. He makes a great effort in bringing to life old Cretan recipes by showcasing the art of eptazyma rusks made with chickpea sour dough. He and his family operate a secret bakery, where they produce flavourful, artfully made hard rusks.

Lychnarakia – the legendary sweet cheese pies of East Crete kept alive by the Women's Cooperative: The village of Kritsa is celebrated for its stunning scenery, rich history and culinary traditions. Lovingly preserved by the local women's cooperative, who keep traditional recipes alive, guests can discover handmade delicacies – such as lychnarakia. Locally known as 'quick pies' due to their yeast free preparation, these legendary sweet cheese pies of East Crete are sprinkled with cinnamon and sesame seeds. Another favourite is Lasithi's water pies – neropites – with their soft, pouch like folds filled with creamy mizithra cheese, served drizzled with honey.

THE CULINARY PROPOSITION: DINING AT PHAEA BLUE & PHAEA CRETAN MALIA

PHĀEA BLUE: A Culinary Journey Rooted in Cretan Tradition

This boutique hotel offers a deep connection to local culture through farm-to-table gastronomy and immersive seaside dining, where every meal is an invitation to savor Crete's rich culinary heritage.

Anthós: A Tribute to Cretan Gastronomy

Honoring the timeless traditions of Cretan cuisine, Anthós is a celebration of sustainability, seasonality, and community. The restaurant's philosophy is rooted in shared dining, with ingredients sourced directly from the hotel's organic kitchen garden and local farms, ensuring that every dish reflects the land's natural bounty.

Drawing inspiration from Crete's deep culinary legacy, the menu highlights whole foods, fresh seafood, and pasture-raised meats, featuring cherished celebratory dishes such as 'Gamopilafo' and 'Antikristo'—both integral to the island's traditions.

Blue Door: Greek Summer on a Plate

Once a humble fisherman's stone house, Blue Door is more than a restaurant—it is a living relic of the island's maritime past, where the salt air carries whispers of history, myth, and the enduring rhythm of the sea.

According to local lore, the house belonged to Nikolaos, a fisherman known not only for his uncanny ability to predict the tides but for his generosity—his home was a gathering place for seafarers returning from long voyages, a refuge where stories were exchanged over grilled fish, homemade raki, and the simple warmth of shared meals.

Today, Blue Door is thoughtfully reimagined while remaining deeply rooted in regenerative placemaking. By preserving cultural heritage and breathing new life into a historic space, this traditional Greek taverna offers a sanctuary of authenticity—a place where the spirit of Cretan cuisine thrives in its purest form.

Its name is a cultural emblem - blue, like the Aegean, the Greek flag, and the doors of island homes painted to ward off evil and protect seafarers, to the endless skies and waters that define the landscape.

Situated right next to the sea, with impressive views across to Spinalonga, Blue Door pays tribute to time-honored cooking methods, heirloom ingredients, and treasured family recipes that shape the selection of sharing dishes under the guidance of Executive Chef Giannis Kalivretakis. This summer, the scent of wood-fired bread from the outdoor oven only deepens the sense of homecoming.

Whether it's a shot of raki, the traditional Greek meze tray, or the catch of the day every bite is infused with the rhythm of the waves and the warmth of tradition, capturing the purity of the island, the essence of Greek summer and the genuine local dining culture of big family feasts and sharing tables.

And then, there's Haris - the taverna's charismatic host known as 'the doctor' - who along with this team offers more than a meal. His remedy for stress and worries? A shot of homemade Cretan raki! Guests are welcomed like old friends, treated to local delicacies and heartfelt moments that embody the true spirit of *philoxenia*. This isn't just dining. It's memory-making, the Greek way.

Additional Venues

- **Votsalo Bar** – Overlooking the Aegean Sea and the storied Spinalonga Island, Votsalo elevates the art of the aperitivo, offering a curated selection of cocktails, fine wines, and rare spirits in a setting where the golden hour is meant to be savored.
- **Dessert Balcony** – A haven for those with a sweet tooth, Dessert Balcony pairs Greek and Cretan desserts with breathtaking panoramic views, creating the perfect place to indulge in a leisurely after-dinner ritual.
- **Beach Bar** – Nestled at the water's edge, the Beach Bar is a serene escape, where guests can unwind to the sound of the waves, enjoying refreshing drinks and light bites infused with the island's laid-back spirit.

PHĀEA CRETAN MALIA: A Celebration of southeast Mediterranean & Cretan Gastronomy

Under the culinary direction of Executive Chef Lefteris Iliadis, PHĀEA Cretan Malia's dining philosophy is deeply rooted in sustainability, seasonality, and authenticity. Across its three signature restaurants, the resort highlights the pure flavors of Crete, Italy, and the Levant, sourcing ingredients directly from its organic gardens and local farms to create dishes that embody the essence of the Mediterranean.

Mouries: Where Fire Meets Tradition

At Mouries, Crete's culinary heritage is honored through a menu that is as simple as it is profound. Cooking takes place over an open flame, embracing primal techniques that enhance the natural depth of flavor. In this outdoor kitchen, the focus is on thoughtful sourcing and seasonality, where every dish reflects a deep connection to the island's land, traditions, and soul. With each bite, guests experience a piece of Crete's living legacy.

Almyra: The Mediterranean, Reimagined

Perched at the northwesternmost tip of the resort, Almyra offers a setting as breathtaking as its cuisine. This elevated Italian concept blends the warmth of Mediterranean living with refined flavors, celebrating handcrafted pasta, fresh seafood, and rustic elegance. Sweeping Aegean views, an atmosphere of effortless sophistication, and a menu rooted in Italian simplicity make Almyra a true homage to la dolce vita.

MEZZE: A Culinary Mosaic of the Levant

MEZZE is a vibrant dining experience, inspired by the rich flavors and communal spirit of the Levant. Designed around large communal tables and inviting lounges, MEZZE fosters connection and conviviality, encouraging guests to come together over generous sharing plates and bold, spice-infused flavors. The open kitchen becomes a stage, where the art of Levantine cooking unfolds in real-time, creating an experience that is both dynamic and deeply satisfying.

Additional Venues

- **Mediterraneo** – A celebration of Greek gastronomy, this all-day dining haven highlights regional recipes, specialty dishes, and locally inspired delights, offering an authentic taste of Greece in every bite.
- **Melissi** – Located at the heart of the resort's expansive lobby and lounge, Melissi is an elegant retreat where guests can unwind over expertly crafted cocktails and classic drinks, making it the perfect space for both daytime relaxation and evening indulgence.
- **The Beach Shack** – A laid-back, seaside escape, where the sun, sand, and sea meet a menu of refreshing drinks and light bites, capturing the essence of effortless island living.
- **Kafenio** – Hidden in the resort's lush gardens, this picturesque stone-brick café is a love letter to Greek coffee culture. Traditional wooden chairs and rustic charm set the scene for slow moments, strong coffee, and plates of Cretan meze, all best paired with a glass of tsikoudia.
- **The Crush** – A scoop of happiness, offering a playful selection of artisanal ice creams, sorbets, and frozen treats, ensuring a sweet, refreshing pause for guests of all ages.

GUEST EXPERIENCES: A DEEPER CONNECTION TO CRETAN GASTRONOMY

Beyond its exceptional dining venues, PHĀEA curates immersive experiences that invite guests to explore Crete's rich culinary heritage—not just as spectators, but as active participants in the island's traditions. At PHĀEA, every meal is an experience, and every experience is an opportunity to connect with Crete on a deeper level.

PHĀEA Blue Experiences

PHĀEA Farmers Feast Pop-Up & Earth Cooking

This seasonal pop-up offers guests a profound connection to the land through a gastronomic experience that honors Crete's seasonal bounty. Led by the hotel's Executive Chef, the PHĀEA Farmers Feast is more than a meal—it is an invitation to engage with the ingredients, understand their origins, and celebrate the cycle of the seasons.

At the heart of this experience is Earth Cooking, an ancient Cretan technique that uses the heat of the earth itself to slowly transform ingredients into dishes of extraordinary depth and character. This tradition, passed down through generations, embodies Crete's culinary philosophy—one that values patience, purity, and deep respect for nature.

Blue Door: A Seaside Sanctuary Steeped in Myth & Memory

Nestled along the rugged Cretan coast, Blue Door is more than a restaurant—it is a living relic of the island's maritime past, where the salt air carries whispers of history, myth, and the enduring rhythm of the sea.

Once a humble fisherman's stone house, the structure dates back generations, standing as a quiet witness to the ebb and flow of life on the island. According to local lore, the house belonged to Nikolaos, a fisherman known not only for his uncanny ability to predict the tides but for his generosity—his home was a gathering place for seafarers returning from long voyages, a refuge where stories were exchanged over grilled fish, homemade raki, and the simple warmth of shared meals.

Legend has it that Nikolaos never locked his door, believing that the sea was not to be possessed but to be honored, and that no traveler should be turned away. The weathered blue door, still standing today, became a symbol of hospitality, renewal, and the unbreakable bond between land and sea.

When PHĀEA set out to restore this historic space, they embraced the philosophy of regenerative placemaking, ensuring that Blue Door's soul remained intact. Every stone was preserved, every wooden beam restored, breathing new life into an old story while honoring the past. Today, the restaurant stands as a tribute to the island's deep-seated traditions, where time-honored cooking methods, heirloom ingredients, and treasured family recipes take center stage.

Guests step into a place where the rhythm of the waves sets the tempo, where each dish captures the purity of the island and the essence of Greek summer. Here, history is not just remembered—it is tasted, felt, and passed on, plate by plate, story by story, tide after tide.

Additional Culinary Experiences

- **The Traditional Caique Experience** – A seafaring journey on a traditional fishing boat that captures the romance of the Cretan coastline, featuring a private onboard dining experience with locally inspired dishes and fresh-caught seafood.
- **Wine Tasting** – A sensory exploration of Crete's terroir-driven wines, guided by expert sommeliers who bring the island's rich viticultural heritage to life.
- **Cooking Lessons** – Hands-on workshops where guests learn time-honored techniques, from hand-rolling traditional pasta to mastering Cretan mezze.
- **Private Dining** – A bespoke culinary experience, where guests enjoy a tailor-made menu in an intimate, secluded setting, celebrating the essence of Crete through thoughtful storytelling and impeccable flavors.

PHĀEA Cretan Malia Experiences: A Celebration of Land, Tradition & Flavor

At PHĀEA Cretan Malia, every experience is an invitation to connect with Crete's deep-rooted culinary traditions—from the art of bread-making and farm-to-table dining to immersive olive oil and wine tastings that reveal the island's agricultural legacy. Here, gastronomy is a multi-sensory experience that nourishes the body, mind, and spirit, creating lasting connections between guests, the land, and Crete's enduring traditions.

PHĀEA Farmers Feast at Bostani

Just a short walk from the resort, Bostani is a living expression of Crete's agricultural heritage—a vibrant organic garden brimming with seasonal fruits and vegetables grown in harmony with the land. Here, Executive Chef Lefteris Iliadis redefines farm-to-table dining by bringing the table to the farm itself, offering an intimate, immersive culinary experience where guests handpick ingredients before savoring a meal crafted in the very landscape that nurtured them.

Bread Making at Mouries: A Tribute to Tradition

Bread-making in Crete is more than sustenance—it is a sacred ritual passed down through generations. At Mouries, guests are invited to dive deep into this ancient tradition, learning how to bake their own bread from scratch under the guidance of expert bakers. From kneading techniques to the alchemy of slow fermentation, every step is a hands-on homage to one of Crete's most fundamental culinary arts.

Additional Experiences

- **Private Dining at the Beach** – An exclusive, seaside culinary escape, where guests enjoy a tailor-made menu crafted by expert chefs, set against the backdrop of the Aegean's golden horizon.
- **Private Cretan Breakfast & Beach Picnic** – A curated morning feast, featuring freshly baked bread, honey, Cretan cheeses, and sun-ripened fruits, all prepared with the island's purest ingredients.
- **Traditional Cooking Lessons** – A hands-on journey into Cretan gastronomy, where guests cook alongside the Executive Chef, using garden-fresh produce and locally sourced ingredients to create authentic dishes that celebrate the flavors of the island.
- **Olive Oil Tasting: The Essence of Crete** – Guests delve into the world of Crete's 'liquid gold'—extra virgin olive oil—through bespoke tasting sessions in partnership with local producers from the Agricultural Cooperative of Kritsa village. Here, they discover the nuanced flavors, rich heritage, and health benefits of this essential ingredient in the Cretan Mediterranean Diet.

- **Wine Tasting: A Journey Through Crete's Vineyards** – An exploration of Crete's indigenous grape varieties, where guests taste and learn about Plyto, Dafni, Vilana, Mandilari, and Kotsifali, uncovering the stories behind each label and the terroir that makes them unique.

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