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Top 10 Things to Eat and Drink in Athens

By [Rebecca Hall \(Box\)](#)

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The land of the ancient gods and the city that introduced democracy to the western world knows how to celebrate life — and that's through food. Eating isn't merely a time to fill your stomach; it's to be appreciated and enjoyed with good company, hence mealtimes can go on for two, sometimes three, hours for locals in Greece.

Here are the top 10 dishes to eat and drink in Athens and the best local spots to find them.

1 Meze

The Greek version of Spanish tapas, meze is made for sharing and can be eaten to accompany an alcoholic drink or as a main dish. It consists of a variety of dishes, including dolmades (stuffed grape leaves), tzatziki (yogurt and garlic dip), any number of Greek or Cretan salads (with feta or homemade cheese) and meat, cheese and spinach pies made with phyllo pastry.

Where to Get Meze: [Mana's Kouzina-Kouzina](#) in Saint Irene Square — with views of the Acropolis — is your best place for meze in Athens. With all produce sourced locally, it supports Greek businesses in these difficult financial times and prides itself on making "food like your grandmother would cook," with recipes passed down through generations.



Credit: My Greece My Travels

2 Koulouri

A popular snack for both locals and tourists wandering the sites, koulouri is a simple ring of bread sprinkled with sesame seeds or cheese and olives and is sold from koulouri stands all over the city.

Where to Get Koulouri: [To koulouri tou Psyrí](#) is the bakery that supplies the majority of stands in the Athens area, and it is located in the Psyrí neighborhood of Athens, near Monastiraki. You can buy koulouri from the stands located throughout the city or directly from the bakery.



Credit: Travel Passionate

3 Greek Yogurt

You've probably eaten Greek yogurt before, but you haven't really tasted it until you try it from the oldest dairy shop in Athens. The yogurt and other dairy desserts available (such as rice pudding) are made with milk from sheep on local farms, thus ensuring its freshness and thickness. Served with Greek honey, you're in for a real treat.

Where to Get Greek Yogurt: [Stani](#) is a popular dairy shop with locals. Founded in 1931, it is situated in the Omonia district of Athens, a short walk from Monastiraki.



Credit: Stani

4 Souvlaki

You can't go to Greece and not try souvlaki! The Greek version of fast food, it's actually quite healthy. Souvlaki (loosely translated "little skewer") is cubes of grilled pork or lamb on a stick. Most often it is served with tomato, onion, parsley, tzatziki and fries wrapped in pita bread.

Where to Get Souvlaki: The locals tend to go to [Kosta's](#), operating since 1950 and located just off Mitropoleos Street near Syntagma Square. You'll find every food outlet and restaurant serving souvlaki, but avoid the ones in touristy Monastiraki.



Credit: Travel Passionate

5 Falafel

Not usually thought of as a Greek dish but a legacy of the Ottoman Empire, falafel is a vegetarian fritter made from ground chickpeas. Falafel are usually served in a pita with chickpeas, tomato, lettuce, cucumber, eggplant and yogurt sauce or tahini.

Where to Get Falafel: [Falafellas](#) on 51 Aiolou Street is the place to buy yours. Centrally located, it's frequented by locals and tourists alike. Look for the white-and-green-striped awning and be prepared to wait. It's worth it.



Credit: Travel Passionate

6 Chicken Mastihato

This dish is one of the many classic Greek dishes served at [Tzitzikas Ki O Mermigas](#) with a twist. The chicken fillet comes on a nest of kadaifi pastry with creamy Chios mastic sauce and bacon drizzled over it.

Where to Get Chicken Mastihato: You can find this unique dish at any one of the four [Tzitzikas Ki O Mermigas](#) in and around the capital. Decorated as a small, 1950s Greek village store and popular with locals, the more touristy Syntagma Square location is the best one to eat in if you're just visiting Athens for a few hours because it's more centrally located at 12-14 Mitropoleos Street.



Credit: Collette Winter

7 Loukoumades

Loukoumades are small, yeast-risen puffs deep-fried until golden brown, drizzled with honey and sprinkled with cinnamon and icing sugar (similar to confectioner's sugar in the U.S.). Some are injected with the cream of your choice, (banana, lemon or chocolate), but we prefer to eat them the traditional way, without any added cream.

Where to Find Loukoumades: The centrally located, traditional sweet shop [Krinos](#) on 87 Aiolou Street (near Falafellas) has been making and selling this traditional Greek dessert (among others) since 1923 and is the place to buy and try them.



Credit: Travel Passionate

8 Ouzo

If you're not a fan of licorice, then don't try this strong Greek liquor. Served in small shot glasses, sip it with or without ice — and sip it you should! Great with meze, ouzo is best enjoyed in an ouzeri, a café that specializes in stocking many forms of this drink and accompanying it with many types of traditional Greek food.

Where to Find Ouzo: [To Kafenejo](#) is one such ouzeri. It is located in the central tourist area of Plaka, around the Acropolis on Epipharmou Street, yet it is exceedingly popular with locals. Its ouzo comes from the Greek island of Chios.



Credit: Siri Spjelkavik

9 Greek Coffee

Making good Greek coffee is an art form. Ground coffee beans and cold water are slowly brought to a boil in a small pot called a briki with your desired amount of sugar. Then the sweetened coffee is poured into your cup. Like everything else in Greece, it's designed to be enjoyed slowly. You can only drink it to a certain point, though; once you get to the — what can only be described as "sludge" at the bottom — you'll be chewing it off of your spoon.

Where to Find Greek Coffee: Greek coffee can be ordered in any café, but the best non-touristy places in central Athens are located in Iroon Square in the neighborhood of Psiri, near Monastiraki.

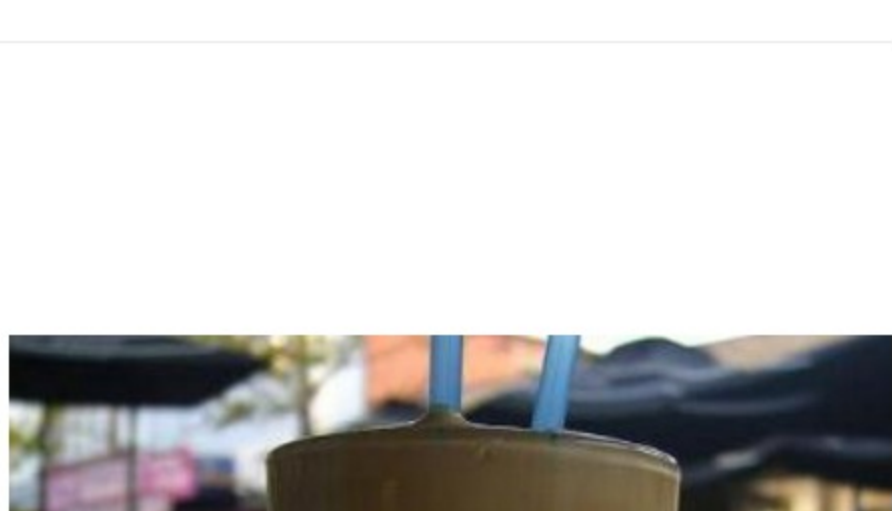


Credit: Will Bakker

10 Frappe

Another Greek favorite, frappe is instant Nescafe mixed with water, milk and lots of sugar. It's mixed to a froth and served with ice — perfect on a hot day after exploring the sites. If caffeine is not your thing, ask for a decaffeinated version.

Where to Find Frappe: Again, in central Athens, the Psiri neighborhood near Monastiraki is teeming with cafés little known to tourists but well frequented by locals.



Credit: Alpha

Editor's Note: Your cruise ship will dock at the cruise terminal in Piraeus, Greece. All of the food and restaurants on this list are located about nine miles away from Piraeus in the city center of Athens, about a 20-minute drive or a 17 Euro taxi ride away.

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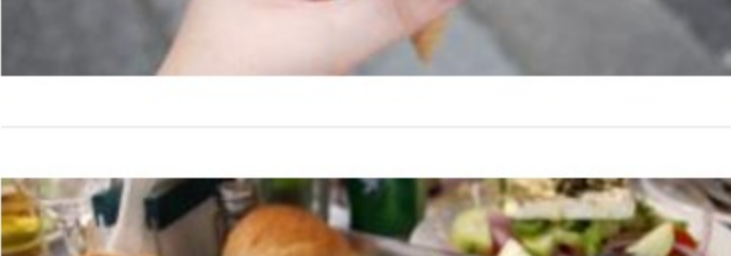
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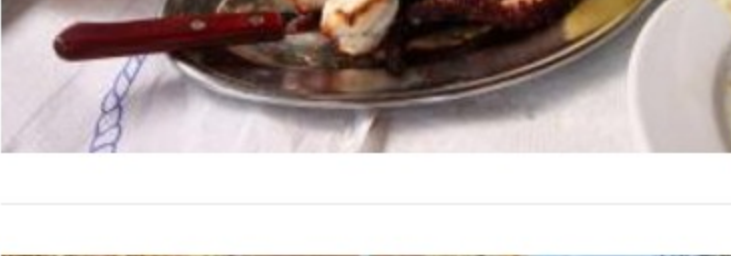
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