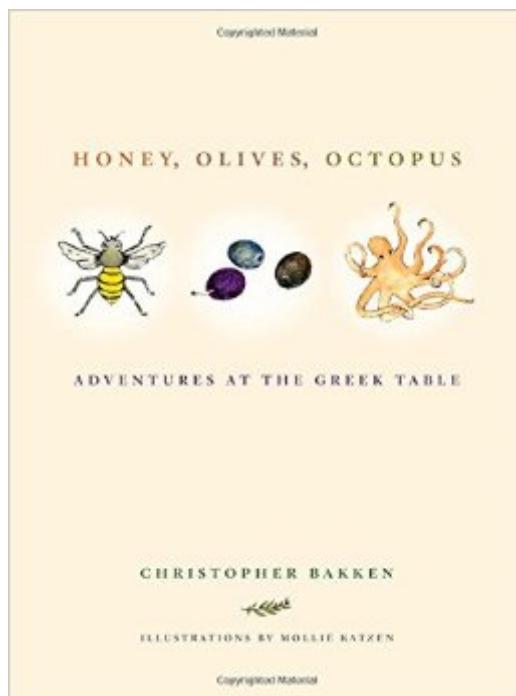


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# Honey, Olives, Octopus: Adventures At The Greek Table



## Synopsis

Combining the best of memoir, travel literature, and food writing, Christopher Bakken delves into one of the most underappreciated cuisines in Europe in this rollicking celebration of the Greek table. He explores the traditions and history behind eight elements of Greek cuisine—olives, bread, fish, cheese, beans, wine, meat, and honey—and journeys through the country searching for the best examples of each. He picks olives on Thasos, bakes bread on Crete, eats thyme honey from Kythira with one of Greece's greatest poets, and learns why Naxos is the best place for cheese in the Cyclades. Working with local cooks and artisans, he offers an intimate look at traditional village life, while honoring the conversations, friendships, and leisurely ceremonies of dining around which Hellenic culture has revolved for thousands of years. A hymn to slow food and to seasonal and sustainable cuisine, *Honey, Olives, Octopus* is a lyrical celebration of Greece, where such concepts have always been a simple part of living and eating well.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Christopher Bakken's hybrid memoir, *Honey, Olives, Octopus: Adventures At the Greek Table*, which combines travel writing and food writing, closely inspects one of the last remaining European pastoral cultures under threat by the industrial food machine. An outsider to Greek culture, Bakken's chapters "trac[e] the circuitous route of the goat path" in order to discover not only the inherent (and subversive) values embedded in the Greek culinary tradition, but also in the very pleasures of the Greek table, in which the author revels indulgently. Bakken's cast of characters, who were instrumental in his education into Greek culture and Greek food ways, not only teach him about the

traditions of the table, but also unveil the essence of life in Greece. Though his chapters are not rhetorically driven, Bakken's claim is that the history of Greece "is written in the elements of its cuisine: olives, bread, fish, and cheese. Meat, beans, wine, and honey." And to this end, each of his chapters explores one particular foundational food. These chapters pack an immense amount of information, from the chemistry of wild bread yeast, to the caramelization of onions in an island chickpea dish called revithia (because who doesn't love a chickpea!), to the viscosity of thyme honey. Interspersed between the main chapters are little recipe vignettes that are more narrative than how-to-guides offering glimpses into the ways traditional recipes reflect the agricultural values he sketches in each chapter. In one moment, on the island of Thasos, Bakken finds himself "wiping the flavor of the island from [his] chin, savoring the combination of tsipouro anise, squid juice, charcoal, and olive oil that triggers on [his] tongue the idea of Thasos.

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