

# "THE RETHYMNON DECLARATION ON CUISINE AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE

BASED ON THE EXPERT CONFERENCE  
*“ELEA: PRODUCING AND CONSUMING OLIVE OIL:  
A CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN CULINARY HERITAGE”*

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## **The Rethymnon Declaration on Cuisine as a Cultural Resource**

*Adopted in Rethymnon, Crete (Greece), Saturday 30 October 1998 at the EU sponsored Expert Conference "ELEA: Producing and Consuming Olive Oil: A contribution to European Culinary Heritage"*

*Dis-moi que tu manges, je te dirai qui tu es.*  
- *Jean-Anthelme Brillat Savarin, France, 1825*

### Preamble

Food is a cultural resource which brings people together at the same time reflecting their heritage, manners and way of life. The participants of the ELEA conference met together on the island of Crete where the cultivation of olives is central to its cultural life. Issues such as quality, authenticity, "savoir-faire" or locality were identified as important elements to understanding culinary culture. Building upon the multidisciplinary discussions and field research on the production and consumption of olive oil, the following key principles were identified and form the basis for a future action plan.

### Rethymnon principles

1. Economic integration and globalisation continue to link cultures more closely together. At the same time they may work against cultural diversity and pluralism, in both the commonly understood arts and heritage aspects of a society as well as in popular cultural traditions including food and cuisine and rural ways of life.
2. Intangible heritage goes beyond languages and values and includes culinary traditions, history and conviviality. Creativity should be recognised as being as valuable and tangible in the culinary arts as it has been for the high arts.
3. Cultural diversity is as important as biodiversity for a sustainable future. Cultural homogenisation is as strong a force in the spread of fast foods and so-called "natural", but industrially-processed foods as it has been for other standardised cultural products, eg. in the field of film and television.
4. The defence of local and regional cultures requires the full and imaginative use by public authorities in partnership with civil society of the cultural resources and traditions available, including those relating to food and cuisine. In addition to food safety and nutritional value, emphasis should be placed on ensuring the authenticity of processes of production, the origin and quality of the product ("terroir") as well as the local customs and traditions surrounding their use.
5. Economies of scale and market failure are as common in the activities of artisanal cuisine as they are in the cultural industries, with both requiring public sector encouragement. Markets alone can not maintain cultural diversity.

6. The essential aims of cultural policy are to establish objectives, create structures and secure adequate resources in order to create an environment conducive to human fulfilment. This goes beyond the arts.
7. Cultural policies should be reinforced in a way which identified food culture, cuisine and the culinary arts as valid objects for support and promotion.
8. Cultural considerations should be taken into consideration and integrated into other policy areas, including agriculture, social, rural and urban development.
9. Artisanal agri-food, cuisine and culinary heritage dimensions should be incorporated into tourism policies and programmes of agricultural and cultural ministries.
10. Foreign ministries, international cultural promotion agencies and trade ministries should incorporate the promotion of culinary culture in various aspects of their activities.