



A Real Taste of Cyprus!

by Eve Gratton

A few weeks ago on 14 May, the traditional 'glyka' year began with the harvest of the karidhi – the green walnuts - which are made into the most highly prized 'glyko' of all! 'Glyka' ('glyko' in the singular!) are seasonal fruits that are preserved in sweet sugar syrup. For centuries these have been the treat offered to guests by Cypriot housewives and this custom can also be found in many parts of the Middle East.

The preparation of 'glyka' by Cypriot housewives is thought to have started in medieval times when sugar canes were grown in large plantations on the south coast of the island in areas such as Episkopi and Kolossi. There has always been a surplus of seasonal fruit, and in the days before refrigeration, sugar was used as a preservative and 'glyka' became a popular way to preserve fruit for use in the winter months.

A wide variety of fruit - and some vegetables - are used for 'glyka' and include apricots, figs, cherries and baby aubergine as well as orange and lemon peel and chunks of watermelon skin, which all taste surprisingly good! Karidhi remains 'king of the 'glyka' and these are gathered at this

time of year when the walnuts are still green and soft, and their inner shells unformed. Amusingly, you can often tell who has been making this type of 'glyko', because their hands get badly stained - gloves are absolutely essential when peeling the walnuts!

In the past, most housewives made some form of 'glyka', which was time consuming, as the fruit has to be soaked for several days and then simmered for a while in the sugar solution. Today, most buy jars of 'glyka' from their local supermarket and many of these have the distinctive label bearing the name 'Katerina'. Katerina Christoforou has a spacious visitors' shop situated on the Polemidhia - Platres road at Dhoros (near Lania) and visitors can watch the 'glyka' being prepared in the kitchens behind through large 'picture' windows. After the walnuts, Katerina and her staff will be preparing 'glyko' from the apricots and so this continues throughout the year as the different fruits come into season.

Katerina is always experimenting with new types of 'glyka' and jams, and one of her most popular new ones is babotsosika – prickly pear – which tastes delicious and is known to help prevent prostate cancer. She also makes mushroom 'glyko' and has recently started making garlic 'glyko' – which has all the health benefits without the aftertaste! Katerina has recently extended her range of diabetic jams and marmalades too.