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# Developing a new gastronomic and wine tourism experience : a case study in Eumelia, Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse

Margarida Silva

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**MASTER THESIS**

**Developing a new gastronomic and wine tourism experience:  
A case study in Eumelia, Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse**

**MARGARIDA SILVA**

**Internship developed at Eumelia, Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse;  
Homeodynamic Development S.A.**

**Gouves, Greece**

**Professional Supervisor  
Marilena Karadima**

**Academic Supervisor  
Dr. Nashidil Rouiai  
University of Bordeaux**

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**ABSTRACT AND KEYWORDS**

This master thesis examines the potential of an innovative hands-on cooking, wine tasting and pairing experience at Eumelia Farm & Guesthouse in the region of Laconia, Greece. By analysing guest demographics and preferences, the study reveals a strong fit between the experience and guest desires. Eumelia's guests, primarily American, prioritise food and cultural immersion during travel. A guest survey indicates a high interest (92%) in exploring new local flavors and a strong preference for cultural activities such as cooking classes and food tours (100% respondents interested in learning about local food and culture). This experience addresses these preferences by offering hands-on cooking with local ingredients and a wine pairing. Furthermore, the experience aligns perfectly with Eumelia's vision for the future. Eumelia places great importance on the promotion of local products and cuisine, a core value reflected in the programme. The experience fosters collaboration with local suppliers, contributing to the vision of a thriving agritourism destination. Also, it aids in cultural preservation by highlighting traditional dishes.

In addition to aligning with Eumelia's vision and guest preferences, the programme presents a strategic business opportunity. Eumelia faces challenges with lower occupancy rates during off-seasons. This distinctive experience offers an attraction to draw guests during these periods, appealing to a specific demographic of food-focused travellers. While targeted marketing is crucial for success, the survey suggests a viable price range for the experience, aligning with Eumelia's existing operations. Finally, this thesis argues that a hands-on cooking and wine tasting experience has strong potential for success at Eumelia. By aligning with guest desires, supporting Eumelia's vision, and presenting a strategic business opportunity, the programme can significantly contribute to Eumelia's growth and solidify its position as a leader in Laconia's agritourism landscape.

Keywords: Agritourism; Culinary tourism; Gastronomic Tourism; Peloponnese.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis

EU – European Union

UN – United Nations

UNWTO – United Nations World Tourism Organization

## INTRODUCTION

This Master's thesis was completed during the fourth semester of the Erasmus Mundus Master on Wine Tourism Innovation (WINTOUR), intake 2022-2024, at the Homeodynamic Development Société Anonyme (SA) company, known as Eumelia, Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse, in the Peloponnese Region of Greece. The research topic explores the potential integration of a new product offer – a hands-on cooking class with the wine pairing included. This new experience delves into the potential of gastronomic and wine tourism to unlock the cultural richness of the Peloponnese for future travelers. These principles encompass a range of values, including respect for the earth, organic permaculture, ecological tourism, and guest involvement. It examines current trends in gastronomic tourism and analyzes the target audience seeking unique and authentic food experiences. Through a combination of research, analysis, and discussion, this master thesis aims to develop a well-defined experience that caters to the aspirations of travelers and celebrates the unique culinary identity of the Peloponnese.

### **Description of the company**

Eumelia, Organic Agrotourism Farm & Guesthouse was established in 2011, operating as an organic farm with guesthouse facilities and services. The business is managed by Mr. Frangiskos Karelas and Mrs. Marilena Karadima - its proprietors. The property, which was inherited by Mr. Karelas from his great-grandfather, is situated two kilometres from the village of Gouves in Laconia, a prefecture located in the southeastern corner of the Peloponnese peninsula. Eumelia's position within Greece is localized in Annex 1, Picture 1.

Eumelia means harmony and was established to represent the ideals of its owners with the main goal of reflecting the region's identity through sustainable methods. The farm offers a holistic experience, including accommodation, agricultural activities, gastronomic workshops, such as wine and olive oil tastings, and cooking classes, among others. The farm practices permaculture using hemodynamic and biodynamic methods to preserve and promote soil fertility for future generations. The guesthouse buildings and interiors were constructed using environmentally friendly materials and ecological technology. Eumelia employs natural waste management, recycling, composting, and polyculture practices, and encourages guest participation in all farm activities, including farming and harvesting olives, grapes, herbs, fruits, and vegetables.

At present, the farm's energy consumption is largely met by solar panels, and a geothermal pump and circulation system have been implemented to decrease reliance on municipal electricity for heating water.

The property consists of five guesthouses (only four working at the moment), each with a capacity of four people, and a larger main building – The Womb Lounge - that serves as an entertainment venue with dining facilities. The guest houses offer up to sixteen beds per night and are suitable for both single guests and large groups.

It is situated on a twenty-hectare plot of land and features a diverse range of planted flora, as well as naturally occurring garrigue. Olives and olive oil are staple products produced from the olive trees on the property. Almond, pine, and cypress trees are also inter-planted among the grapevines and olive trees to promote a diverse landscape. Additionally, there is a vegetable garden that provides fresh products for guest's breakfasts and dinners.

In 2012, four small vineyards were planted with indigenous Greek grape varieties: *Asproudi*, *Kydonitsa*, *Agiorgitiko*, *Avgoustiatis* and *Moschofilero*. These varieties were selected for their suitability to the hot, dry Mediterranean climate and their indigenous nature. Currently, the wine is produced in limited quantities. From the grape to the finished wine in the bottle, every step is done manually, without the use of machinery or chemical additives. In the future the goal is to increase the production of natural, minimally processed wines from organically grown grapes and to enhance the wine tourism offerings. No chemical herbicides, pesticides or fungicides are used on the farm, particularly in the vineyards.

Eumelia invites both local and international schools to visit, demonstrating a dedication to future knowledge transfer. Additionally, the organization operates under the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 frameworks prescribed by the European Union (EU) and is open to collaborating with schools, universities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Also, Eumelia is a registered host for Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) Greece. This allows the organization to welcome volunteers from around the world.

Eumelia has been awarded the highest level of certification by TripAdvisor, receiving 5 stars. Additionally, they have received the Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2018, as well as the Green Leaders Platinum award, which recognizes their commitment to sustainable practices.

## SWOT Analysis

Eumelia's distinctive geographical position and dedication to environmentally conscious practices position it as a formidable competitor in the tourism industry. However, in order to ensure long-term success, it is important to understand the internal strengths and weaknesses of the company, as well as the external opportunities and threats that it faces. This SWOT analysis will provide a strategic framework for Eumelia to capitalize on its inherent advantages, address its limitations, leverage emerging opportunities, and mitigate potential risks. By critically evaluating these factors, Eumelia can establish a robust position within the market and refine its offerings to deliver an exceptional experience for guests.

*Table 1 - SWOT Analysis*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Remote location – Immersion	Lack of accessibility – transportation
Multifunctional activities	Human resources – skilled employees
Environmental responsibility	Unpredictable flow of the volunteers
Half board service	Lack of mentorship
Flexibility of the workers	Limited wine equipment – limited production
EU funding	Limited budget
Motivated proprietors	Lack of competition – working as a destination
Family-owned business	Proprietors live on the farm
Authentic product offers and ethic	
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Space to expand the infrastructures (guest houses, common spaces and agricultural parts )	Climate issues
Partnerships with local farmers and producers	Lack in recognition by the locals
Events	No PDO for the white dry wine
Trending “Eco tourism” theme	Depending on EU funding
Increasing of the potential of wine tourism in the region	Pricing policy based on the foreign customer base
Competitive pricing	



## Strengths

Eumelia farm is built upon a foundation of distinctive strengths. The location of the establishment is remote, which provides an immersive experience for the guests. The multifunctional approach provides guests with more than just accommodation, fostering social interaction and engagement with the environment and the animals. A commitment to environmental responsibility resonates with today's travellers, as Eumelia prioritises the use of locally sourced ingredients and sustainable practices. The half-board service (breakfast and dinner included in the experience) facilitates the efficient coordination of operations for both guests and staff, thereby ensuring a seamless and effective operational process. Moreover, the adaptable nature of the workforce enables Eumelia to adapt its offerings to meet the specific needs of each guest group. EU funding opportunities present a potential source of support for future endeavours. Finally, the establishment benefits from the passion and dedication of its proprietors, whose enthusiasm is contagious and contributes to a positive guest experience. Eumelia Farm is family-owned and operated nature fosters a personal touch, which allows for deeper connections with guests and solidifies a strong foundation for long-term success. These inherent strengths position Eumelia well within the tourism industry.

## Weaknesses

While Eumelia boasts considerable strengths, certain weaknesses need to be addressed to optimise the experience that the guests will have. The remote location presents a challenge for some potential guests, necessitating the development of new solutions for transportation. Recruiting and retaining skilled employees to oversee the experience can be challenging, particularly for a small, rural business with limited human resources. The unpredictable flow of volunteers can result in inconsistency in scheduling and may generate other problems since the volunteers will arise from many different professional backgrounds and each time a new volunteer is welcomed, valuable time and energy is spent teaching the new arrival the functioning of the farm and business. Furthermore, the absence of mentorship opportunities for staff may impede the development of skills and diminish the overall quality of the experience. The lack of specialized wine equipment may result in a restricted range of wine bottles that can be produced and consequently to be sold. A restricted budget may impede marketing initiatives and investments in essential resources. While the lack of direct competition may appear to be a positive factor, it can also position Eumelia as the sole destination in the area, which could potentially limit guest options and require a strong focus on differentiation. Finally, the fact that the proprietors reside on the farm while fostering a personal touch, might necessitate balancing work and personal life, which could impact guest service during non-working hours.

## **Opportunities**

The property benefits from a generous amount of space, which allows for the expansion of infrastructure, including guest houses, common areas, and agricultural sections. Such an expansion would not only increase the number of guests that can be accommodated, but also provide additional revenue streams. Forming alliances with local farmers and producers would reinforce Eumelia's dedication to sustainability and offer guests a more genuine experience. The organisation of events centred around food, wine, and the local culture could attract new guests and further establish Eumelia as a destination. The growing trend of ecotourism presents a valuable opportunity for Eumelia to leverage its existing strengths in environmental responsibility. Furthermore, the growth of wine tourism in the region presents an opportunity for collaboration with other wineries and the development of wine-themed experiences. Finally, the implementation of competitive pricing strategies can attract a wider range of guests without compromising profitability.

## **Threats**

Eumelia is confronted with several potential threats that require consideration. Climate-related issues, such as extreme weather or altered growing conditions, have the potential to disrupt grape harvests and negatively impact wine quality. The limited recognition amongst the local population constrains Eumelia's capacity to diversify its customer base. Furthermore, the absence of a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) for white dry wine may limit its appeal to wine connoisseurs. Furthermore, the reliance on EU funding renders the enterprise susceptible to alterations in the terms and conditions of the funding, or to a reduction in the availability of funding. Finally, a pricing strategy based solely on foreign clientele may prove challenging in attracting domestic tourism if economic fluctuations or travel trends shift.

By acknowledging these potential threats and developing appropriate mitigation strategies, Eumelia can ensure the long-term viability of its business.

## **Duties during the internship**

The internship duties at Eumelia align seamlessly with the ethos of the establishment's hospitality, which prioritizes engagement, immersion, and communal sharing. Eumelia is a familial enterprise that values hands-on involvement from its owners and a small, dedicated staff, fostering a warm and inclusive atmosphere year-round. The tasks during the internship were divided into two domains: farm maintenance and facilitating guest experiences.

On the agricultural front, interns were responsible for taking care of the farm animals and tending to seasonal crops. This involved paying close attention to detail, weeding, and planting new seeds. Daily routines included checking on the animals twice a day to ensure their well-being.

During periods of occupancy, guest engagement was a key focus. This was achieved through two different shifts: 10am to 4pm and 4pm to 10pm. The first shift was primarily responsible for checking out guests, cleaning and organizing the houses for the next ones, and preparing for dinner. The second shift was mainly responsible for preparing and serving dinner and breakfast for the following day, which was delivered to the guests' houses while they were having dinner at The Womb Lounge. I was more present during the second shift.

In addition, I had the opportunity to rewrite the most used recipes in a digital form and create a new wine list with the latest arrivals (Appendix A)

### **Aim of the Project**

This master's thesis project is concerned with the revitalization of Eumelia's wine and culinary tourism offerings. The introduction of a new and innovative element, namely "Cook & Sip", is intended to achieve the following objective: It is recommended that the concept be extended beyond the traditional cooking class, incorporating a new type where the guests will cook and learn why a certain wine pairs well with a specific food. This will elevate the experience by showcasing the synergy between Eumelia's seasonal vegetables and their wines or other Greek ones. This will allow guests to discover the nuanced flavors of each wine and appreciate how it complements the specific dishes.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1. Gastronomic Tourism**

The Committee on Tourism and Competitiveness (CTC) of UN Tourism defines gastronomic tourism as a type of tourism activity which is characterized by the visitor's experience linked with food and related products and activities while travelling. In addition to authentic, traditional, and/or innovative culinary experiences, gastronomic tourism may also encompass other related activities, such as visiting local producers, participating in food festivals, and attending cooking classes (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) & Basque Culinary Center, 2019).

As evidenced by Dan, 2013 gastronomic tourism can be considered as a niche travel segment that strives to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between fulfilling the fundamental physiological need for sustenance and engaging in enriching culinary experiences that leave a lasting impression on tourists. Consumption of local food and beverages becomes an integral component of this tourism experience, which also includes visiting places, attending to different traditions and customs and eat local cuisine.

Cuisine has recently assumed an indispensable role in understanding a destination's cultural identity and way of life. It summarizes the very essence of traditional values that resonate with the evolving trends in tourism. These trends prioritize respect for cultural heritage and traditions, a focus on healthy living, and an emphasis on authenticity, sustainability, and the associated emotional experiences.

Furthermore, gastronomy presents itself as an opportunity to revitalize and diversify the tourism sector, thereby promoting local economic development. This can be achieved through the strategic involvement of diverse professional sectors, including producers and suppliers, chefs, and market vendors. The growing significance of gastronomy in tourist destination selection and consumption patterns has led to a twofold effect. Firstly, it has spurred the development of a wider range of culinary experiences centred on high-quality local products. Secondly, it has fostered the emergence of a distinct market segment dedicated specifically to gastronomic tourism.

## **1.2. Wine Tourism as a Subset of Gastronomic Tourism**

Wine tourism, a sub-type of gastronomic tourism, is defined as a form of tourism whose purpose is to visit vineyards, wineries, taste, consume and/or purchase wine, often at or near the source (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) & Basque Culinary Center, 2019).

Furthermore, Wine Tourism has been declared a fundamental element of Gastronomy Tourism by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the Georgia Declaration on Wine Tourism in 2016. Firstly, by basic deduction of gastronomy - the study of good eating. It can also be defined as the transformation of the relationship between culture and food into science and art, which has now started to play an important role in integration with tourism and promotion of every country (Sharma & Nagar, 2023). In addition wine, as a beverage is an element within gastronomy.

For numerous destinations, the production of food and wine represents a fundamental aspect of their history and identity and has become a pivotal element in the nation's brand image. Gastronomy and wine tourism offer a potential avenue for the revitalization and diversification of tourism, the promotion of local economic development, the involvement of numerous professional sectors and the introduction of new uses to the primary sector. Consequently, gastronomy and wine tourism facilitate the promotion and branding of destinations, the maintenance and preservation of local traditions and diversities, and the harnessing and rewarding of authenticity.

### **1.3. Agritourism and farm-to-table concept**

Agritourism is an increasingly important sector of rural economies and is defined as a concept where it condenses a wide variety of agriculture-related activities within the broader context of rural tourism (Martinus et al., 2024). These activities may include the purchase of locally produced goods or experiences that extend beyond merely travelling to a rural setting.

This type of tourism has numerous advantages for rural communities but also some downsides. On the good side, the creation of new job opportunities for the local community (Garau, 2015); increased income and diversification, providing farmers with additional income streams beyond just production. Tourists often pay for other experiences such as farm stays, meals, and participation in activities (Jęczmyk et al., 2015); enhancement of local businesses since tourists visiting agritourism destinations often support local businesses beyond the farm itself - restaurants, shops selling crafts and local products, and transportation services. This creates a ripple effect that benefits the entire rural community of (Ammirato & Felicetti, 2014).

However, there are also some disadvantages of this type of tourism:

- Environmental Concerns - A surge in agritourism activities could lead to increased land use for tourism infrastructure, potentially impacting natural spaces and wildlife habitats, also can put a strain on local resources (water and energy);
- Social and Cultural Impacts: The influx of tourists can sometimes lead to a commercialization of rural culture, potentially diluting or even eroding traditional practices (Lei et al., 2023);
- Competition: The agritourism sector can become saturated, leading to increased competition and potentially lower profits for individual businesses (Kim et al., 2019) and according to Fischer, 2019, it is possible to be a competition between agricultural production and agritourism activities for the time of farmers, particularly those working on small family farm estates. This competition will also extend to other resources, such as space.

The farm-to-table concept extends beyond the simple act of sourcing food directly from farms. It embodies a broader philosophy with significant relevance to the environmental and food security challenges of our times. As global population continues to rise, so too does the demand for food. This demand is often met through industrial agriculture and the mass production of agricultural commodities.

The conventional supply chain, which typically involves transporting food from farms to markets before reaching consumers, also carries potential risks to health and the environment (Bueno et al., 2017). This model disrupts this traditional model, offering the potential to mitigate these risks and promote a sustainable and ecologically sound food system, facilitating the flow of food directly from agricultural production to consumers. Importantly, farm-to-table also plays an important role for strengthening local communities and empowering local farmers. While tourism can enhance the appeal and interest surrounding farm-to-table initiatives, uncontrolled tourism development can lead to overly systematized processes.

Therefore, farm-to-table should be embraced as a synergistic form of tourism development with the potential to decrease the social challenges associated with agriculture, food production and gastronomy, and tourism itself.

## **2. METHODOLOGIC APPROACH**

This section outlines the research methodology that employs a mixed methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of Eumelia Farm's potential for success in gastronomic tourism within the Peloponnese region.

The research will be divided into two parts – external and internal analysis:

- The external assessment will focus on the tourism data in Greece, with a particular emphasis on the Peloponnese region. This will entail an analysis of how the Peloponnese region and gastronomic tourism in Greece are positioned in the global market. This thesis aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of food and wine tourism in Greece, with a specific focus on the opportunities and challenges for Eumelia Farm in the Peloponnese region.



- The internal analysis will entail the examination of Eumelia Farm's strengths and weaknesses through the use of customer data analysis and interviews with the owners - Ms. Frangiskos and Mrs. Marilena (Appendix B). This will assist in the comprehension of the current customer base and the owners' vision for the future. The interview had 8 open questions (which led to other related questions), it took 45 minutes and was made at the end of the internship. Additionally, a survey was conducted of guests of Eumelia Farm who had stayed or visited during the period of the internship. The survey (Appendix C) with 22 questions (2 open questions and 20 closed) had yielded 25 responses, which may appear to be a relatively small number. However, the focus was solely on Eumelia's customer base, given that the company's target market is already well-defined. Moreover, during the interview, the owners stated that they do not intend to alter this strategy.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1. External research**

##### **3.1.1. Tourism in Greece**

Greece has been experiencing a sustained tourism boom for years due to its Mediterranean location in the south of the Balkans, with a landscape of mountains and countless islands that are incomparable in Europe. with a landscape of mountains and countless islands that is incomparable in Europe. Additionally, the country's rich history, with many monuments and attractions from Greek antiquity, is a major draw for tourists.

The most well-known cities in Greece are Athens and Thessaloniki, both of which have numerous archaeological sites and museums. However, there are also many art treasures to be found in less touristy areas, such as Sparta, the Meteora monasteries, and the many small castles and old towns. Additionally, the country boasts beautiful beaches on the Ionian Islands, the Peloponnese, and the Aegean Sea. Several thousand large and small islands attract many tourists annually, including Crete, Rhodes, Mykonos, and Santorini. Greece's hot summers and mild winters, with temperatures reaching up to 17°C in December, make it an increasingly popular destination for European travelers. Visitors from China and the USA are also on the rise. The pleasant climate allows for an extended vacation season compared to other European countries.

According to INSETE Intelligence<sup>1</sup>, in 2023, Greece had 24 053 020 international arrivals with the highest peak in July in August with 4 million each month. Most of the tourists fly to the capital city of Greece – Athens – with 7 million international arrivals in 2023. Meanwhile, in the summer period (months of June, July, and August), the airport Heraklion, on Crete Island is the most popular, with almost 2 million international arrivals, followed by Rhodes in Dodecanese region – 1,4 million international arrivals and Corfu (Ionian islands) with 1,1 million arrivals. In contrast, the mainland gets less popular in these months, especially the Peloponnese region – where Eumelia farm is located – with a total of 203 153 international arrivals in 2023 with the highest peak in July. This region faced a decrease in 2019 and 2023 with less than 20,2% of international arrivals at Araxos airport and less than 11,5% at Kalamata airport, both in the Peloponnese region (Insete Intelligence, 2023).

Combining all of this data and other indicators, Greece is the 7<sup>th</sup> country with the most international arrivals in 2022 in Europe, according to UNWTO, led by France, Spain, Turkey, Italy, the United Kingdom and Germany (UNWTO, n.d.).

Regarding the inbound markets, from 2019 to 2022, Germany remained the leading inbound travel market for Greece, with a total of 4,026,000 arrivals in 2019, a decline to 1,526,000 in 2020, and a subsequent rebound to 4,352,000 in 2022. The United Kingdom followed, with arrivals declining from 3,499,000 in 2019 to 1,069,000 in 2020, before surging to 4,485,000 in 2022. France, Italy, and Romania also maintained significant positions in the market, with arrivals fluctuating over the years. The United States experienced a notable increase in arrivals from 2020 to 2022, reaching 1,089,000. Other key markets included the Netherlands, Cyprus, and Austria, with varying levels of visitation throughout the period (Leading Inbound Travel Markets in Greece 2022, 2023).

According to the study “Greece Reputation Tracker”<sup>2</sup> of the fourth quarter of 2023, Greece, as a country, was mentioned 960K+ in social conversations about travel being more than half (54%) in Social Networks (e.g.: X, Tik Tok, Youtube, Pinterest, Vkonatakte). Beyond the summer season, a diverse array of subjects was examined, showcasing Greece as more than the summer destination. Food and cultural topics are always popular.

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<sup>1</sup> The Institute of SETE-INSETE is a non-profit organization founded in early 2013, on the initiative of the Greek Tourism Confederation (SETE), by four partners with intense activity in critical areas of the Greek tourism market.

<sup>2</sup> Made by INSETE – Analyze Greece online reputation through social networks, blogs/forums, online news, magazines / newspaper and TV / Radio.



Various conversations on food, including street food, sustainable food festivals, and even sunset dinners, attracted attention. Culture have also been a focal point online, especially with Athens receiving the title of "Europe's leading cultural city destination"

Furthermore, this quarter featured numerous lesser-known spots and activities highlighted for their uniqueness. In terms of ratings and reviews (numerical scores), Greece stands out with a score of 9.1 (out of 10) compared to an overall European score of 8.7. Broken down by category, culture has the highest score (9.4), followed by the sea (9.1) and food and drink (9.0). In terms of sentiment scores (data from written reviews), staff one comes first with 9.5 points, followed by value for money (9.1), sustainable travel (8.4) and hygiene (8.4). In terms of the nationalities of tourists, the United States of America and the United Kingdom gave Greece the highest overall scores (9.3 and 9 respectively), followed by German and Italian visitors. If we compare Greece with the Peloponnese region, the differences are not so great, except for the number of ratings: there were not enough ratings to evaluate all the sentiment subcategories, which were limited to value for money and staff. However, the overall score for the Peloponnese is 9.2 - higher than for Greece as a whole and Europe as a whole.

Culture stands out at 9.5, the sea at 9.4 and food and drink at 8.9 - like the overall score for Greece. However, in terms of markets, France rated the Peloponnese region the highest (9.6), followed by the United States of America (9.4) and Italy (9.1). These reviews and ratings show that the Peloponnese region has great potential for growth in terms of tourism.

Moreover, according to Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020, "gastronomy is steadily becoming an important factor in destination branding and identity. It provides the 'divergence' factor that is so significant for the people who travel in seek of genuine new experiences.

The gastronomic tourism has already been recognized as a sector on its own, and travel agencies, tourism operators and regional economies integrate it to their portfolio." Although the same authors mention that "regarding the new trends, Greece is still a bit "behind", as the anthropocentric culture of the Greeks still poses as the genuine factor in the tourism interactions offered. Nevertheless, as Airbnb-type services become pervasive, so those alike services in gastronomy are expected to grow in global scale, both in personal/family settings, in group settings, or in any type of gastronomic experience offered".

### 3.1.2. The case of Peloponnese region

The Peloponnese is the largest peninsula of Greece and one of its nine geographical departments (Annex 1, Picture 2). It lies to the south of the mainland and is connected to it by a narrow strip of land, the Isthmus of Corinth. The Peloponnese is administratively divided into seven prefectures (Achaia, Ilia, Messenia, Arcadia, Laconia, Argolida and Corinth). It has an area of 21,439 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 1,086,935 inhabitants (Greece, 2019). It is a historical cradle of Hellenism and has been inhabited since prehistoric times. The Peloponnese also shares common characteristics throughout its territory, such as history, language, and culture. In addition, the morphology of its landscape, such as rivers and mountains, runs from one end of its territory to the other, clearly demonstrating its geographical and cultural unit. The northern part of the region benefits from its proximity to Athens, making it easily accessible for travellers. In terms of wine, this region is a leading producer of wine in Greece, with many wineries and vineyards. It accounts for 29.1% of the country's wine-producing land cultivating a variety of common grapes in a rich tapestry of terroirs.

This diversity is evident in the presence of numerous PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) wines produced in distinct sub-regions like Nemea, Mantinea, and Aigialeia, contributing to a "biodiversity value compared to other regions with less indigenous varieties" (Alebaki & Koutsouris, 2019).

The Peloponnese region has 7 PDO<sup>3</sup> and 13 PGI<sup>4</sup> (*Appellations & Classifications*, n.d.) designations, highlighting its rich wine heritage, although in Laconia there is no existing PDO that recognizes the production of regional dry wine. The only PDO classification available in Laconia is reserved to produce a sweet wine: PDO Monemvasia-Malvasia. Consequently, there is no existing PDO that recognizes the production of regional dry wine. The absence of PDO status for dry Laconia wines can be attributed to the limited number of wine producers in the region. This, in turn, has resulted in a lack of recognition by wine consumers in Greece and Europe. (Hoogwerf, 2018)

The wine industry in Peloponnese promotes collaboration through alliances and networks, primarily operating under the auspices of one regional association (ENOAP) and one local association (Nemea), comprising 27 members in the former. These collaborative endeavours aim to enhance the region's reputation and promote its diverse wine offerings.

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<sup>3</sup> PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

<sup>4</sup> PGI: Protected Geographical Indication

Furthermore, gastronomic tourism presents a significant opportunity to revitalise remote areas in the Peloponnese region of Greece, focusing on food culture, local cuisine, and wine. Gastronomic tourism is a growing trend. With millions of people travelling the world in search of new culinary experiences and immersing themselves in local food and drink scenes, gourmet tourism and wine culture are flourishing industries today. A report by Allied Market Research indicates that the global gastronomy tourism market is expected to reach \$1.3 trillion by 2027. Additionally, travellers are increasingly seeking authentic experiences beyond traditional sightseeing. Food offers a unique cultural lens, connecting visitors to local traditions and fostering deeper connections with destinations. Gastronomic tourism and wine culture are becoming increasingly popular, in addition to the industry's overall expansion, due to several important trends. These include the emergence of the foodie culture, the rise in appeal of farm-to-table dining, and the rising popularity of environmentally conscious and sustainably minded travel (Vaibhav, 2023).

In terms of benefits, gastronomic tourism can revitalize local economies in remote areas. It encourages visitors to explore off-the-beaten-path destinations, supporting local farmers, producers, and restaurants. Furthermore, this trend creates new employment opportunities in food production, hospitality, and culinary experiences. It empowers local communities and promotes sustainable development. Additionally, gastronomic tourism fosters the preservation of local culinary heritage and traditional foodways. It incentivizes the continuation of unique recipes and techniques passed down through generations.

The Peloponnese offers several advantages that will facilitate the further development of this trend. These include a rich culinary heritage, which encompasses a diverse range of culinary influences from different historical periods. The region's cuisine encompasses a variety of dishes, from fresh seafood to olive oil production and unique regional dishes.

This wealth of gastronomic experiences represents a significant untapped potential. Many remote areas of Peloponnese are home to many untapped resources, including family-run farmsteads, traditional cheesemakers, and wineries that produce exceptional local products. The Peloponnese can capitalise on its rich gastronomic heritage and unique experiences in remote areas to leverage the gastronomic tourism trend. This approach offers a sustainable path to economic development and cultural preservation for these regions.

Peloponnese has a strong hospitality infrastructure, as evidenced by the presence of 37,733 beds recorded in 2017 (Greece, 2019). Recent strategic business planning has proposed the establishment of seven wine routes, integrating 41 restaurants and seven wine shops. This will offer tourists a comprehensive wine tourism experience.

These routes based on wine and gastronomy that traverse the Peloponnese from end to end are inseparable and indivisible. This highlights why the Peloponnese should exist and prosper as a whole, both economically and as a tourism destination, based on shared values, interests, culture, and history. Furthermore, the Peloponnese's rich wine heritage is celebrated through various events such as the Peloponnese Wine Festival in Athens, the Great Days of Nemea, and Oenoxenia in Egialia. Since 2016, the three regional wine associations have jointly organized two national events each year: Open Cellar Doors in May and European Wine Tourism Day in November. However, despite these advantages, research by Alebaki & Koutsouris, 2019 suggests that "a large part of the area's tourism potential remains unexploited." A recurring theme identified in multiple studies is the lack of cooperation among stakeholders within the region, hindering its development. Additionally, the uneven distribution of accommodation and restaurant facilities across sub-destinations within the Peloponnese creates a competitive disadvantage in some areas.

### 3.1.3. Motivations to travel to Greece

Greece is a popular destination for travelers due to its historical significance, natural beauty, and cultural richness. People who travel to Greece will have a full immersion in a cradle of civilization, the opportunity to visit iconic archaeological sites such as the Acropolis (in Athens) and Delphi village, and the chance to experience the unique Greek culture (Perrottet, 2024)

Moreover, Greece's rich mythology, which is evident in countless sculptures and narratives, provides insight into the beliefs and values of its past inhabitants. In addition to its historical treasures, Greece captivates with its diverse landscapes - the whitewashed houses cascading down the cliffs of Santorini and the turquoise waters of the Aegean provide a picturesque backdrop for relaxation.

In contrast, the dramatic mountain ranges and serene valleys of the mainland offer opportunities for exploration and adventure. The cuisine is also delectable, and the hospitality is warm. Greek cuisine is renowned for its emphasis on fresh ingredients, particularly olive oil, seafood, and vegetables. It offers a sensory delight with succulent *souvlaki* and flavorful meze platters, each bite embodying the country's culinary heritage. Complementing the food is the renowned Greek hospitality, characterized by a welcoming spirit and a genuine desire to share their culture with visitors.

Besides the above motivations, the study "Consumers' Motives on Wine Tourism in Greece in the Post-COVID-19 Era" written by Santorinaios et al., 2023, shows a noteworthy number of young participants (aged 18-25) compared to previous surveys. This emphasizes the desires and expectations of the next generation of wine tourists, and how Greek wine tourism should evolve to attract them.

In terms of consumption habits, while participants consume wine frequently, they tend to prioritize bulk options, which may suggest a preference for locally produced wines. However, there has been a significant increase in bottled wine consumption compared to pre-pandemic times. The study also suggests a link between positive wine tourism experiences and increased loyalty - participants who had enjoyed winery visits in the past were more likely to revisit and engage further with wine tourism services. The focus on the local economy was evident as accommodation at wineries was not a priority for participants. Instead, they preferred to purchase wines and support the local community, thereby stimulating the rural economy. The pandemic seems to have shifted motivations from purely pleasurable experiences to a thirst for knowledge. Also, the participants value opportunities to learn about wine from qualified staff, a desire that existed even before the pandemic. Young participants continue to prioritize affordability, which echoes pre-pandemic trends. Wine tourism festivals and special events hold significant appeal and have the potential to attract new demographics. Furthermore, participants prioritize sustainable experiences, with a focus on easy accessibility and nature-based activities, aligning with a growing global trend. Santorinaios et al., 2023 emphasizes the crucial role of a digital presence for wineries - social media and online platforms were the preferred sources of information for wine tourism opportunities, indicating the need for wineries to embrace the digital world. By understanding evolving consumer preferences and adapting accordingly, Greek wine tourism can position itself for a thriving future.

#### **3.1.4. Wine tourism in Greece**

According to (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2018): “for many decades, the Greek tourism product was considered to be typically Mediterranean, concentrated on the islands as well as along the coastal strip, highly seasonal and mainly dependent on organized mass tourism”.

Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, only a few landmark wineries gained visitor attention, due to either their location in insular tourism destinations or their unique architecture. Since 1990, rural tourism has emerged in Greece as a means of economic growth for less developed areas. Wine tourism, within this framework, has mostly been triggered by bottom-up, collective initiatives that emerged at a regional level and were supported by both private and EU funding. The first of these ventures was a non-profit, non-stock corporation founded in 1993 by 13 wine producers in the Macedonia region.

In 2002, the network was renamed as the Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard (ENOABE), as several wineries from Epirus, Thessaly, and Thrace had gradually joined this initiative. ENOABE has since expanded geographically and has also included cooperating members such as restaurants and hotels since 2008. Currently, the Association comprises 25 wine producers who own 28 wineries and 58 associated companies.

According to a record compiled by (Alebaki & Ioannides, 2017) over 240 of the approximately 1000 active wineries in Greece are involved in wine tourism. At the national level, a collaboration between Regional Wine Producers' Associations and the National Inter-Professional Organization of Wine and Vine (EDOAO<sup>5</sup>) led to the establishment of the "Wine Tourism Committee" in late 2015. This working group is comprised of representatives from each Regional Association, administrative staff from EDOAO, and national experts in the field. The Committee has undertaken several initiatives to promote wine tourism, including the joint organization and promotion of wine events. Additionally, they have created and disseminated a "Wine Events Calendar" and have initiated communication with National and Regional Authorities regarding the establishment of a certification label for wineries open to the public

Recently, Greece has been recognized as the 6th best wine destination in the world by Bounce, due to its understated elegance and enduring legacy in winemaking. Greece has been recognized as the 6th best wine destination in the world by Bounce (The Wine Lover's Index, 2023), due to its understated elegance and enduring legacy in winemaking. This is a great achievement for Greece's wine tourism industry. *Bounce* evaluated 26 countries based on five key factors and gave each a normalized score out of ten. The elements were averaged to determine a ranking that combines quantity, quality, and the intrinsic appeal of wine regions. Greece is currently experiencing a remarkable resurgence in viticulture.

Its diverse landscapes, ranging from sun-drenched islands to mountainous mainland, nurture a mosaic of indigenous grape varieties. For example, the crisp *Assyrtiko* of Santorini and the aromatic *Moschofilero* of the Peloponnese are two such varieties. The wine produced from these grapes is steeped in ancient myths, legendary hospitality, and time-honored practices. Unlike many modern wine regions, Greece successfully blends tradition with innovation, resulting in wines that express both historical depth and contemporary sophistication. This renewed appreciation places Greece on the global wine map, where meticulous craftsmanship, sustainable practices, and a rich bouquet of flavors captivate discerning palates worldwide (Greece Ranked 6th Best Wine Tourism Destination in the World, 2022).

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<sup>5</sup> EDOAO was founded in 2000, out of a merger between the Central Union of Wine Producing Cooperative Organizations of Greece (KEOSOE) and the Greek Wine Association (SEO), which represent the central organizations of the wine sector in Greece (Alebaki & Koutsouris, 2019)

### **3.2. Internal Research**

#### **3.2.1. Eumelia costumer analysis**

Eumelia welcomes guests from March to November inclusive, including holidays. Despite the potential for a high occupancy rate of up to 7300 overnight stays annually, the actual occupancy rate is modest, averaging around 30%. The guesthouses often do not reach their maximum capacity of four guests per house, contributing to this lower figure. In the summer, particularly in August, the occupancy rates soar to 90% or more (Hoogwerf, 2018). Efforts are underway to boost occupancy during the slower months, while during peak seasons, the focus shifts to enhancing the guest experience and maximizing spending per visitor. This is achieved through value-added services such as wine tastings and culinary workshops

According to Eumelia database from the past 5 years (2019 – 2024), the majority of guests who stays overnight are of foreign origin. Only 20% of all tourists are from Europe, while 80% of those staying overnight are foreign nationals. The majority of the international visitors come from the United States of America (USA), which is followed by visitors from Scandinavia, Germany, England, and other first-world nations. It's interesting to note that visitors from the nations mentioned above prioritise finding eco-friendly lodging when they travel overseas. This is consistent with a growing consciousness of social and environmental health and safety, which is particularly sought after by well-educated and wealthy tourists (Hoogwerf, 2018).

#### **3.2.2. Vision of the owners**

To gain a deeper understanding of Eumelia's vision for its tourism offerings and identify the most suitable project for development, a structured interview (Script on Appendix B1) was conducted as a primary qualitative research method. This approach allowed for in-depth exploration of the company's needs and interests.

At the end of the internship, the owners of Eumelia were interviewed: Frangiskos Karelak and Marilena Karadima – proprietors and managers of the farm. This interview conducted face-to-face in May 2024, lasted approximately 45 minutes.

By focusing on Eumelia's business definition, its current structure, opportunities and weaknesses, and operational methods, this interview provided valuable insights that will guide the development of a successful project aligned with Eumelia's strategic goals.

In this interview, the beneficial impact of gastronomic tourism on Eumelia business and the surrounding community becomes evident. Marilena highlights how this type of tourism draws attention to local products and cuisine - "The more people are involved in all aspects of gastronomy," she explains, "the greater the likelihood of a continued focus on local history through food." This newly-acquired appreciation has led to the preservation of traditional dishes and ingredients, such as the *pitaroudia*, a local spinach pie that Eumelia revived and introduced to a renowned which Eumelia guests describes as "mind-blowing", exemplifies the potential of gastronomic tourism to re-discover and celebrate culinary heritage.

In addition to cultural preservation, Eumelia emphasizes the economic benefits for the community. By utilizing local suppliers and producers, this business facilitates the injection of revenue directly into the local economy. "We provide financial support to numerous suppliers within the local community," Frangiskos elucidates, "thereby ensuring that the funds remain within the local economy." This financial benefit is not limited to Eumelia itself. This type of tourism facilitates connections between guests and other local businesses, thereby promoting restaurants, artisans, and shops in the area. This engenders a collaborative network, whereby all parties benefit from the influx of tourists.

Furthermore, the interview elucidates the potential of gastronomic tourism to revitalize a region and create employment opportunities. Eumelia describes the return of Stavriani, a chef who was born and raised in the area but left for work in Athens and internationally. In response to the success of Laconia area, Stavriani returned to the area to open her own restaurant. This narrative exemplifies the capacity of gastronomic tourism to attract new residents and entrepreneurs, thus fostering a more vibrant community.

Nevertheless, obstacles remain. Eumelia underscores the necessity for targeted marketing strategies, noting that local government lacks insight into the specific needs of the community. Consequently, they implement initiatives without first conducting a needs assessment. It is of the utmost importance that established businesses such as Eumelia collaborate with local government to develop a successful gastronomic tourism strategy.

Eumelia's business vision extends beyond the scope of what it is now. Marilena and Frangiskos aspiration is to create a thriving agritourism destination where multiple businesses flourish. "Ideally, there would be another 20 similar businesses in the area," they state. The collaborative spirit, coupled with a focus on promoting the entire region, is essential for attracting a larger tourist base and maximizing the economic and social benefits of gastronomic tourism for Eumelia and Laconia as a whole.



### 3.2.3. Survey to the guests

In order to gain valuable insights into guest preferences and to optimize the new gastronomy and wine tourism product, a survey (Appendix B2) was conducted amongst a sample of Eumelia's valued guests. This part will examine the principal findings of the survey to gain a more profound comprehension of the expectations, satisfaction levels and potential areas for improvement held by guests.

The sample of this survey comprises 25 responses, with 32% of respondents falling within the 18-24 age bracket and 28% within the 65+ age bracket. In terms of nationality, 96% of respondents identified as American, with one individual self-identifying as Vietnamese. Furthermore, approximately 50% of respondents are employed, 36% are retired, and 16% are students. Most respondents (48%) reported an average income level.

The majority of respondents (92%) were visiting Greece for the first time, while 100% had previously visited the Peloponnese region. The 25 respondents indicated that food is one of the most significant factors influencing their destination selection, followed by culture, scenery, and history. Twenty-two respondents (88%) indicated that they intend to visit wine regions or other food-related destinations in Greece during their upcoming vacations. Furthermore, 100% of respondents expressed enjoyment in learning about local food, wine, and culture while travelling. Furthermore, 96% of respondents have participated in a cooking class or food tour while travelling. Additionally, 21 people indicated that they enjoy the most "trying new food and drinks," "learning new cooking techniques," and "the cultural experience."

When queried as to whether the guests would be interested in sampling novel foods and wines, particularly those crafted with locally sourced ingredients, the 25 respondents indicated a positive response. The experiences that are more appealing for them are those associated with small family-run wineries, cooking classes and food tours.

Furthermore, 76% of respondents indicated interest in a hands-on cooking experience where they could prepare traditional Peloponnesian dishes, while also tasting local wines and learning how to pair them. 24% expressed interest, contingent on factors such as price, time constraints, and other considerations. In response to the question regarding the presentation of the experience "Cook & Sip," 92% of respondents indicated interest in participating. The most common products to be learned about are wine, cheese, and vegetables. Regarding the price range, most respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay between €75 and €100.

Twenty percent (20%) of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay between €50 and €75, 16% indicated that they would be willing to pay between €100 and €125, and only 8% indicated that they would be willing to pay more than €125. Finally, nine individuals indicated that they would spend between two and three hours engaged in the experience, which included both the cooking and subsequent consumption of the prepared food. Eight individuals indicated that they would spend between three and four hours, while six individuals indicated that they would spend between four and five hours. Four individuals indicated that they would spend between five and six hours, and three individuals indicated that they would spend more than six hours.

#### **3.2.4. Personal observations**

With these 3 types of analysis, it can be affirmed that guest preferences align perfectly - Eumelia's clientele appears to be particularly interested in food and cultural immersion. A substantial 92% of the surveyed guests expressed a desire to explore new flavours and wines, particularly those with local roots. It is evident that these travellers place great value on learning about the local food scene and culture, as evidenced by the 100% response rate. The survey additionally demonstrates the prevalence of cooking classes and food tours, which are reflected in the new product that will be developed in this master thesis. Furthermore, a resounding 76% of guests indicated interest in a hands-on cooking experience that utilises local ingredients and teaches wine pairing.

There is a clear and strong synergy between Eumelia's vision and the concept of the new product core values - promoting local products and cuisine. This new experience directly supports this objective by showcasing local ingredients and dishes. Furthermore, contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage by placing the spotlight on traditional dishes, thereby safeguarding them for future generations.

There is a clear market potential for this venture: One challenge that Eumelia currently faces is the lower occupancy rates that occur during the off-season months. The new experience represents a valuable tool for attracting guests during these periods by offering a distinctive activity. It has the potential to attract visitors seeking cultural immersion and culinary adventures. Besides, this experience caters to a specific niche of travellers, one that is likely to be underexploited by the few competitors, offering Eumelia a chance to establish even more itself as a leader in this segment.

It is possible to address the challenges that have been identified. One of Eumelia's key objectives is the implementation of targeted marketing. By devising a targeted marketing strategy for the new product, Eumelia can effectively reach the specific audience most interested in such experiences. For example, targeting American tourists seeking culinary-focused holidays can be highly effective.

The survey data indicates a price range of €75-€100, which appears to be within the financial capabilities of Eumelia's existing operation. By implementing a strategic pricing approach, Eumelia can ensure both profitability and guest satisfaction.

Finally, the concept of this new gastronomic and wine tourism product, is in perfect alignment with Eumelia's vision, caters directly to guest preferences, and offers a unique and valuable experience during periods of low occupancy.

#### **4. THE NEW WINE TOURISM PRODUCT FOR EUMELIA – COOK & SIP EXPERIENCE**

##### **4.1. Product definition**

This new product investigates the development and implementation of a new gastronomic tourism experience in Eumelia Farm. The experience centres around a unique combination of elements:

- Hands-on Cooking Class:

The cornerstone of the "Cook & Sip" experience is the hands-on cooking class, which provides participants with the opportunity to engage in a practical culinary activity under the guidance of a professional chef. Guided by the owner Marilena, participants will embark on a culinary journey, learning to prepare traditional Peloponnesian dishes. The emphasis will be on utilising fresh, locally sourced ingredients, with a preference for those obtained directly from the vegetable garden or nearby farms. The class environment will be conducive to interaction, with participants encouraged to ask questions, practise techniques, and gain valuable culinary knowledge.

- Farm-to-Table Philosophy:

"Cook & Sip" is not merely a conduit for the acquisition of culinary skills; it is a comprehensive educational experience that encompasses a multitude of facets. The programme places great emphasis on the importance of utilising fresh, seasonal ingredients that have been sourced directly from Eumelia Garden and/or local farms. By prioritising locally sourced produce, the experience supports the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices within the Peloponnese region. This philosophy not only ensures the preparation of superior-quality and flavourful dishes, but it also enables participants to develop a more profound understanding of the interconnections between the land, the food, and the region's distinctive culinary traditions.

- Guided Wine Pairing:

In order to enhance the overall culinary experience, the "Cook & Sip" initiative incorporates a guided tasting of local beverages. The beverages, which may include regional wines, will be selected with great care to ensure a perfect pairing with the prepared dish. Participants will have the opportunity to gain insight into the production process of these beverages and to appreciate how they enhance the overall culinary experience. By gaining an understanding of the nuances of food and wine pairings, participants will develop a more sophisticated appreciation for the rich culinary landscape of the Peloponnese.

#### **4.2. Target Audience**

The experience "Cook & Sip" is designed to appeal to discerning travellers who are keenly aware of the value of cultural immersion and the quality of the food they consume. This focus on authentic experiences and the use of fresh, locally sourced ingredients aligns with potential participants who value sustainable practices. Furthermore, given the premium price range of the Eumelia wine list and the associated wine and food tourism experience, it can be assumed that the target clients will have a medium-high income in accordance with European standards. It is likely that they will have a high disposable income and will prioritise high-quality experiences. Furthermore, the target audience must share a passion for travel, food, and culture exploration. It would be individuals who are adventurous and curious, seeking unique experiences beyond traditional tourist attractions. Their primary motivation lies in deep cultural immersion through hands-on cooking, appreciating the significance of local ingredients and the connection between food and wine. While "Cook & Sip" caters to solo travellers, it is also ideal for couples, small groups, and families seeking a shared culinary adventure. In Appendix D, can be found an example of a target persona.

#### **4.3. Marketing mix (8 P's)**

This master thesis project proposes a unique cooking class experience that combines hands-on culinary instruction with expert wine pairing, creating a memorable and educational journey for participants.

##### **Product**

The core products are presented in a hands-on cooking class, which provides an opportunity to learn a few traditional dishes from Peloponnese, accompanied by a wine pairing. This will integrate the concepts of gastronomy, wine, and agritourism. Upon arrival, visitors are greeted by the host, who is responsible for guiding them through the experience.

The initial phase of the experience entails a tour of the farm, during which the history of Eumelia, the centenary olive trees, and the chicken coop and vegetable garden will be highlighted. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to select ingredients from the garden to be used in the preparation of the dishes. The subsequent phase will comprise a hands-on cooking class, during which two appetizers, one main dish and one dessert will be prepared, with the wine pairing experience also included (an example of a menu with the wine pairing can be found in Appendix C). The final phase of the experience will be a collective dining experience with the host, seated on the terrace of the (Womb Lounge) main building of Eumelia Farm. As a gift, the guest will receive printed recipes of the prepared dishes and the paired wines.

### **Price**

In order to achieve the greatest success with the "Cook & Sip" experience, it would be prudent for Eumelia to adopt a value-based pricing strategy. The results of the guest survey indicate a willingness to pay between €75 and €100 per person. This reflects the perceived value of fresh local ingredients, hands-on cooking instruction and wine pairing. It is important for Eumelia to consider the costs associated with the ingredients, the selection of wines, the fees for the instructors (if applicable), and the operational expenses. Furthermore, the price should be set at a level that covers all costs while generating a healthy profit margin. Eumelia may offer a basic price of €80 to appeal to the majority of customers, while a premium option costing €100 could be made available for sessions with special features – for example premium ingredients and wines and/or a renowned chef. The offering of package deals combining "Cook & Sip" with accommodation or wine tours could serve to further incentivise bookings. Finally, dynamic pricing based on seasonality or group size, and early-bird discounts, can also optimise revenue generation.

### **Place**

This experience will be made available on the Eumelia Farm website, where it will be included among the currently offered products. As a preliminary measure, the product will be made available for purchase directly through the website, which will be of particular interest to individuals who are already familiar with Eumelia Farm or have previously visited. Conversely, it would be advisable to market the experience through online and offline tourism agencies with a high-end customer profile, partner hotels and booking platforms (e.g. winetourism.com). This would facilitate the expansion of the target audience and the identification of new potential customers.

## **Promotion**

In order to promote the "Cook & Sip" experience within the existing budget, it is possible to leverage the experience through the company's current social media and email marketing strategies. As a means to attract the attention of potential customers, it is essential to create engaging content on social media, such as Instagram, which showcases the welcoming environment and local ingredients. Additionally, an informative newsletter announcing the launch to existing customers, featuring visuals and a clear description with an exclusive discount, can incentivize early participation and maximize the impact of the marketing campaign.

## **People**

The experience requires the involvement of at least two members of the Eumelia staff: a sommelier and a chef. These individuals will be responsible for guiding guests through the experience, allowing them the freedom to engage according to their desires and skills. Currently, Eumelia is experiencing a shortage of personnel, which has resulted in Marilena assuming responsibility for two key roles: culinary preparation and the curation of wine pairings. In the future, it would be advisable to have at least one additional individual to assist with the washing up and clearing of glasses.

It is of the utmost importance to establish contact with the individual responsible for the vegetable garden, in advance of the scheduled visit. This is to ensure that the participants are aware of the specific vegetables that will be available for the experience. It is also essential to inform the chef, Marilena, of this information, as it will enable her to plan the dishes that can be prepared.

A minimum of two and a maximum of 20 participants are required for this experience to proceed. This ensures the quality of the experience remains high.

## **Processes**

Several significant processes are associated with the experience development in question and must be taken into account. The menu is designed to cater to dietary needs and food restrictions. It is therefore recommended that participants disclose any vegetarian or vegan preferences or food allergies. This information will be employed to modify the menu in a manner that ensures the safety and enjoyment of all participants. The challenge of balancing standardisation and personalisation will be addressed. Although a pre-defined order of activities will provide structure, flexibility is of the essence. During the programme, the host may gather information about the participants' interests.

This allows for adjustments to be made to focus on specific aspects of the cooking process or local ingredients that resonate most with the group. The objective is to achieve a balance between the delivery of core programme elements and the customisation of the experience in order to create a truly memorable event.

The scheduling of the event is also a significant factor that must be taken into account. In consideration of the existing facilities, there is no restriction on the weekday, unless a group books the entire property and does not wish for other day trip travellers to disturb them. Concerning the schedule, it is recommended to commence the event in the morning, allowing attendees to enjoy the food during the lunch period. Alternatively, the event could begin in the mid-afternoon, with food served at dinner. Due to the necessity of planning and staffing, participation will be by reservation only.

Performance measurement is a crucial aspect of any business endeavour. Customer satisfaction will be a primary key performance indicator (KPI) to be measured through post-experience verbal feedback and online reviews. While measuring brand engagement and customer loyalty is more challenging, it presents an interesting area for further research. Potential avenues for further investigation include tracking social media engagement and repeat bookings from satisfied participants.

### **Physical Evidence**

Although the concept of physical packaging is not typically associated with a service such as "Cook & Sip," it is nevertheless important to create a visually impactful and branded experience. This can be achieved through several key elements, including the ambience of the venue. In Eumelia Farm, the experience will be conducted in the Womb Lounge, as this is where the kitchen is situated and all the requisite materials for the experience are located. Additionally, to provide a tangible memento of the experience, it is recommended that participants be given a branded souvenir apron or a recipe booklet featuring the prepared dishes, with options for dietary adaptations and the curated wine pairings.

### **Performance/productivity**

The efficacy of "Cook & Sip" must be evaluated using a multifaceted approach. Firstly, it is recommended that participants be invited to provide feedback through post-experience surveys and that online reviews be encouraged on platforms such as TripAdvisor. This will provide valuable insights for the continuous improvement of the experience. The analysis of this feedback will inform adjustments to the programme content, delivery, or menu in order to optimise participant satisfaction. Secondly, while sales figures can be used as a performance indicator, the experience niche focus and potential premium pricing strategy prioritise a high-quality, unique experience over mass market appeal.

This focus on participant experience and feedback-driven improvement positions "Cook & Sip" for success as a sought-after programme for discerning travellers seeking a deeper cultural immersion through the lens of Greek cuisine.

## CONCLUSION

This master thesis has investigated the potential of a new hands-on cooking and wine tasting experience, named "Cook & Sip," at Eumelia farm. By analysing the demographic profile, preferences and vision of Eumelia, this study has demonstrated a strong alignment between the experience and the needs of both Eumelia and its clientele.

The analysis demonstrated that Eumelia's guests, predominantly American, prioritise food and cultural immersion during their travels. They demonstrate a high level of interest in exploring local culinary traditions and a strong preference for culturally focused activities such as cooking classes and food tours. "Cook & Sip" directly addresses these desires by offering a hands-on cooking experience with local ingredients and wine pairing education.

Moreover, this new gastronomic product is in perfect alignment with Eumelia's vision for the future. The programme fosters collaboration with local suppliers, promotes local products and cuisine, and contributes to cultural preservation by highlighting traditional dishes. The experience offers a distinctive draw for guests during off-peak periods, appealing to a specific demographic of food-focused travellers.

In conclusion, the implementation of "Cook & Sip" has the potential to significantly contribute to Eumelia's growth and solidify its position as a leader in Laconia's agritourism landscape. This programme facilitates a more profound interconnection between Eumelia, its guests, and the region's rich culinary heritage. As Eumelia develops its future through gastronomic tourism, the "Cook & Sip" initiative represents a promising avenue for success.



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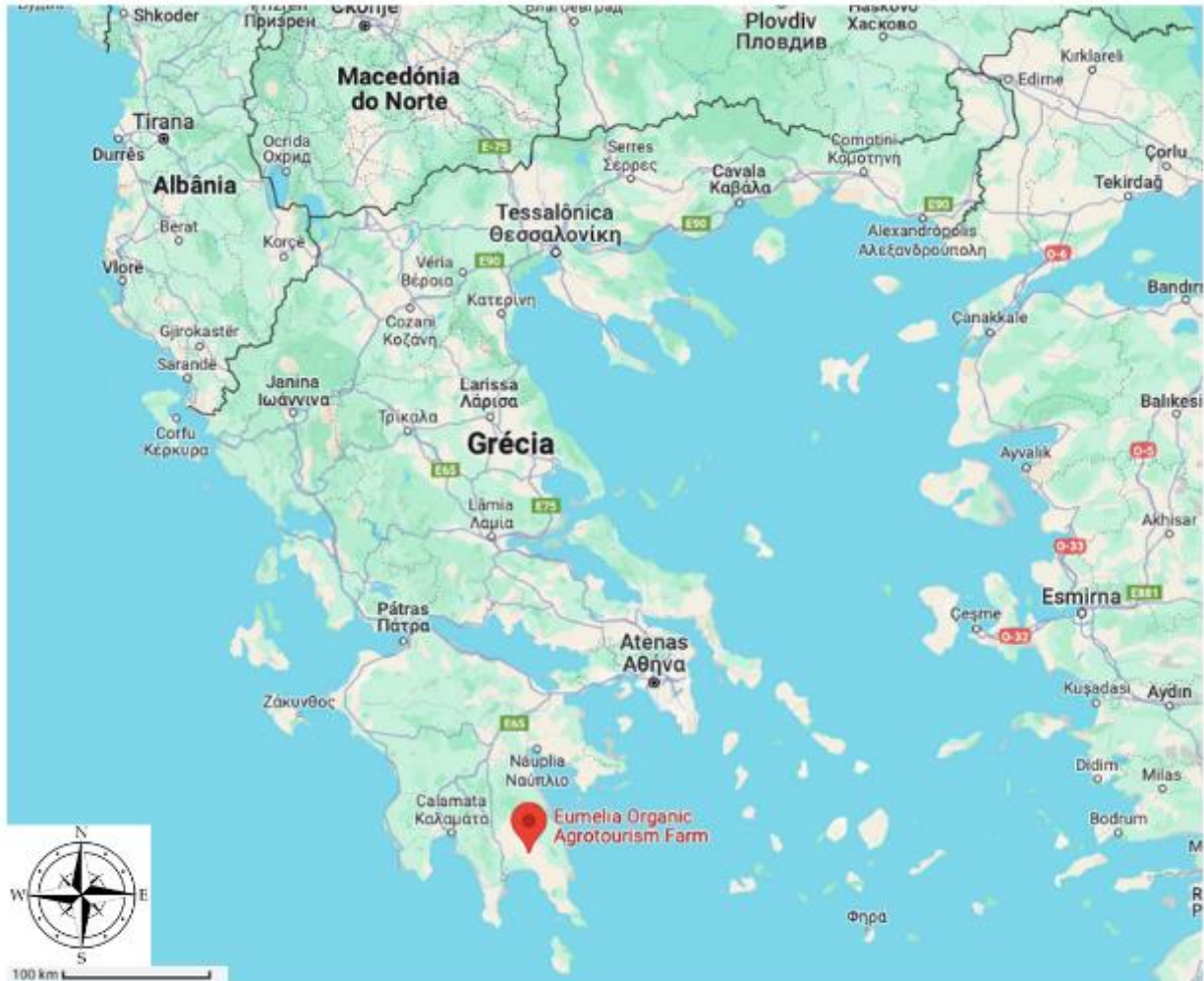
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ANNEXES

Eumelia's position within Greece



Picture 1 - Eumelia's position within Greece

Greece Regions



Picture 2 - Greece Regions



APPENDICES

Appendix A – Eumelia Wine List

## Natural Sips

*Toast to mother nature's finest*



### WHITE WINES

- Savvatiانو, 2021 30€  
*Georga's Family, Savvatiانو 100%, PGI Attica*
- Malagouzia & Assyrtiko, 2022 30€  
*Georga's Family, Malagouzia 65%, Assyrtiko 35%, PGI Attica*
- Natural Moschato Alexandrias, 2020 32€  
*Limnos Organic Wines, Muscat of Alexandria 100%, PDO Limnos*
- Roditis Nature, 2022 33€  
*Tetramythos Winery, Roditis 100%, PDO Patra, Peloponnese*
- Retsina Black Label 25 years edition, 2022 32€  
*Georga's Family, PGI Attica*
- Verdea, 2022 44€  
*Cefalinos Winery, Goustolidi, Makrypodia, Pavlos, Robola, Skiadopoulo, Traditional Appelation Verdea, Cefalonia*
- Vidiano Nature, 2022 36€  
*Zouberakis Vineyards, Vidiano 100%, PGI Crete*

### ORANGE WINES

- Vorias & Helios Orange, 2021 33€  
*Markogiannis Winery, Assyrtiko 100%, PGI Olympia, Peloponnese*
- Malagouzia Orange, 2019 49€  
*Tatsis Winery, Malagouzia 100%, Goumenissa, Macedonia*
- Santameriana Orange Amphora, 2020 41€  
*Sant'Or Winery, Santameriana 100%, Santomeri, Peloponnese (Biodynamic)*
- Orange Ritinitis 32€  
*Markogiannis Winery, Roditis 100%, Traditional Appelation - Retsina, Elia, Peloponnese*
- Philia Amphora, 2022 50€  
*Philia Wines, Muscat Blanc à Petit Grains 100%, PDO Samos*





## ROSE WINES

- **Eumelia Rose Wine, 2023** 30€  
*Eumelia, Athiri - Kidonitsa - Avgoustiatis - Agiorgitiko, Laconia*
- **Hoof & Lur, 2023** 37€  
*Troupis Winery, Moschofilero 100%, Milia, Peloponnese*
- **Mandilari & Savvatiano Black Label, 2023** 32€  
*Georgas Family, Mandilari & Savvatiano, Attica*
- **Negoska Rose** 31€  
*Tatsis Winery, Negoska 100%, Goumenissa, Macedonia (Biodynamic)*
- **Rose Liatiko Nature, 2022** 35€  
*Zoumberakis Vineyards - Oenos Nature, Liatiko 100%, PGI Crete*

## RED WINES

- **Agiorgitiko BIO, 2019** 35€  
*Sant'Or Winery, Santameriana 100%, Santomeri, Peloponnese*
- **Mavro Kalavritino Nature, 2020** 33€  
*Tetramythos Winery, Mavro Kalavritino 100%, PGI Peloponnese*
- **Agiorgitiko Nature, 2019** 32€  
*Tetramythos Winery, Agiorgitiko 100%, PGI Achaia, Peloponnese*
- **Nature Naoussa, 2018** 40€  
*Thymiopoulos Vineyards, Xinomavro 100%, PDO Naoussa, Macedonia*
- **3.14 Kotsifali, 2021** 45€  
*Paterianakis Boutique Winery, PGI Crete*
- **Philia Fokiano, 2019** 49€  
*Philia Wines, Fokiano 100%, PDO Samos*
- **Laurier Noir Nature, 2021** 44€  
*Tetramythos Winery, Mavrodaphne 100%, Peloponnese*

## SPARKLING WINES

- **Yomatari Ancestral (Pet Nat)** 35€  
*Georga's Family, Savvatiano 100%, 2021, Attica*
- **Piperato, 2023** 35€  
*Georgas Family, Grenache Rouge, Mandilaria, Attica*
- **Karanika Extra Brut Cuvée Speciale, 2022** 57€  
*Karanika Winery, Assyrtiko - Xinomavro, Amyntaia, Macedonia*





## **Appendix B - Interview script with the owners**

In your experience, what are the main challenges faced by remote areas in the Peloponnese?

Are there any existing tourism/wine and food related initiatives in your area? If so, how successful are they in attracting visitors?

From your perspective, what unique food and agricultural products does your region offer that could be of interest to tourists?

Are there any traditional food preparation methods or recipes specific to your region?

In your opinion, how could gastronomic tourism benefit your community? (Economic opportunities, job creation, cultural preservation)

What kind of support or infrastructure development do you think would be necessary to make gastronomic tourism successful in your area? (Marketing, promotion, training for local businesses)

Are there any existing local farms, producers, or restaurants that you think have the potential to become part of a gastronomic tourism experience?

How can we ensure that the development of gastronomic tourism is sustainable and respectful of the local environment and way of life?

## **Appendix C - Survey answered by the guests**

### **Biographic and contact data**

**What is your age range?**

- 18 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65+



**What is your nationality?**

Short answer

**What is your current occupation?**

- Employed
- Student
- Unemployed
- Retired

**How do you define your level of income?**

- No income
- Low
- Average
- More than average
- High

**If you would like to receive the results of this study, please write your email here**

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**Is it your first time visiting Greece?**

- Yes
- No

**Is it your first time visiting the Pelopponese region?**

- Yes
- No



**Which regions are you visiting in these holidays in Greece?**

- Attica (Athens)
- Central Greece: (Lamia, Livadeia, Chalkida)
- Central Macedonia (Thessaloniki)
- Crete (Chania, Rethymno)
- East Macedonia and Thrace (Kavala, Alexandroupoli, Xanthi)
- Epirus (Ioannina, Arta, Preveza)
- Ionian Islands (Corfu, Zakynthos, Kefalonia, Lefkada)
- North Aegean (Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Lemnos)
- Peloponnese (Kalamata, Patras, Nafplio, Sparta)
- South Aegean (Mykonos, Santorini, Rhodes, Paros, Naxos)
- Western Greece (Patras, Agrinio, Pyrgos)
- Western Macedonia (Kastoria, Kozani, Florina)

**What factors were most important to you when choosing your travel destinations?**

- Scenery
- History
- Culture
- Food
- Wine activities
- Shopping
- Sport activities
- Night culture
- Other

**Did you consider visiting any wine regions or food related in Greece during your trip planning?**

- Yes
- No

**Do you enjoy learning about local food and culture when you travel?**

- Yes
- No



**Have you ever participated in a cooking class or food tour while traveling?**

- Yes
- No

**If yes to question X, what did you enjoy most? (Select all that apply)**

- Learning new cooking techniques
- Trying new foods and drinks
- Meeting other travelers
- The cultural experience
- Other

**Are you interested in trying new foods and drinks, especially those made with local ingredients?**

- Yes
- No

**If you are interested in wine tourism, what kind of experiences would be most appealing to you?**

- Small family-run wineries
- Focus on organic practices
- Wine tastings
- Wine tastings with food pairing
- Cooking classes
- Food Tours
- Market shopping

**Would you be interested in a hands-on cooking experience where you could learn to prepare some traditional Peloponnesian dishes, at the same time taste local wines and learning how to pair them?**

- Yes
- No
- Maybe (depending of the price, time needed, etc.)



**Imagine a relaxing afternoon in the Peloponnese where you can:**

- Learn to cook a delicious local dish.
- Enjoy a guided tasting of local wines or drinks paired with the food.
- Have fun and socialize with other travelers.

**Would this type of experience sound appealing to you?**

- Yes
- No

**Which local food or beverage category are you most interested in learning about?**

- Wine
- Beer
- Cheese
- Olive oil
- Seafood
- Vegetables
- Other (Please specify)

**What is a reasonable price range you'd consider for a "Cook & Sip" experience? (food and wine included)**

- €50-€75
- €75-€100
- €100 - €125
- €125+

**How much time would you ideally dedicate to this activity during your trip (cooking + enjoy the food after)?**

- 2-3 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 4-5 hours
- 5-6 hours
- 6+ hours

## Appendix D – Target Persona

Allie, 32 years old

- Lives in Boston, United States of America;
- No children;
- Prefers to travel with her boyfriend who got married last year;
- Occupation: Health coach

What does Allie values?





- Price: ██████████
- Quality: ████████████████████
- Luxury: ████████████████
- Eco – responsibility: ████████████████████

Allie has money due to her family funds and proprieties however she invested in her health coaching business; Allie likes to spend money on vacations as long as it matches quality and comfortable lifestyle; Allie also spends some weekends away glamping or in an eco-resort with slow food and yoga classes;

Frustrations: Pressure to maintain a this lifestyle, and social circle; feeling isolated;

Interests: Gastronomy and wine; mental health knowledge; Yoga; Electric cars; Retreats; Vegan restrictions

Appendix D – Example of a menu with the wine pairing

Dish	Wine	Explanation
<p>Zucchini ceviche with herbs and feta cheese</p> 	<p>Natural Moschato Alexandrias, 2020, Savvoglou Tsivolos</p> 	<p>The lemon marinade in the zucchini ceviche brings acidity to the dish. The wine offers a touch of sweetness that balances the acidity of both the ceviche and the wine itself. It also has floral and citrus notes that complement the fresh herbs in the ceviche. Its slight sweetness can create a pleasant contrast with the salty feta.</p>
<p>Spinach pie (<i>pitroudia</i>)</p> 	<p>Savvatiانو, 2021, Georga's Family</p> 	<p>This crisp, unoaked Savvatiانو with its bright citrus and herbal notes will complement the spinach and feta flavors perfectly. The acidity helps cut through the cheese's richness.</p>
<p>Dolma (with cabbage leaves) with lemon sauce</p>	<p>Santameriana Orange Amphora, 2020, Sant'Or, Santameriana 100%</p>	<p>This wine is made in an amphora, which can impart a slightly earthy character to the wine. This earthiness can be complementary to</p>

		<p>the earthy and vegetal notes of the cabbage leaves. The acidity is crucial for cutting through the richness of the dolma filling (vegetables and rice). The wine has some citrus notes, which can provide a refreshing counterpoint to the savory and earthy elements of the dish.</p>
<p>Semolina halva with orange notes</p> 	<p>Vorias &amp; Helios Orange, 2021 Markogiannis Winery, Assyrtiko 100%, PGI Olympia, Peloponnese</p> 	<p>The orange flavors in the Vorias &amp; Helios Orange wine will directly complement the orange notes in the halva balancing through the citrus flavors. Additionally, the slight bitterness found in the wine can help cut through the richness of the semolina base in the halva.</p>