

Mediterranean Date Dessert

Whole, pitted dates----- Mesopotamia, Fertile crescent 7000+ years ago

Feta (goat's milk) Cheese----- Name: Greek, 17th century Origin: Greece, possibly as early as 6th century B.C.E.

Pomegranate Sauce----- Iran, Egypt, Turkey, India cultivation record from before recorded history.

Slice the dates lengthwise, but leave them connected so you can open them like a pocket. Cut the feta cheese into cubes, one cube for each date. Place the cubed cheese inside the dates. Drizzle the pomegranate sauce, which you can optionally heat in a pot on the stove beforehand, over the combined dates and cheese. Serve and enjoy!

Dates: evidence for date palm domestication is found in engravings on cylinder seals and texts illustrating the date palm in Sumerian Mesopotamia beginning ca 2500 BC. The domestic date palm was produced from a wild version of the same name, some of which have been found today in North Africa and the Middle and Near East. Evidence found in Mesopotamia associated with domesticated palms includes the planting of date groves, date palms planted by gender, and free-flowing irrigation and other water management structures.

Feta Cheese: The earliest record of feta cheese dates back to the Byzantine Empire. It has been associated closely with Crete, located in present day Greece. The word "feta" has an interesting genealogy. It comes from the Italian word fetta (meaning slice). Fetta, in turn, is of Latin origin from offa (meaning bite or morsel). It first appeared in Greek language in the 17th century, possibly referring to the process of serving the cheese by cutting it in thin slices. Many, however, attribute a Classical Greek origin to feta cheese. According to myth, the Cyclops Polyfimos was the first to have prepared it. In the museum of Delphi, 6th century BC artifacts also make references to the process of feta cheese-making.

Pomegranate: is native to Iran and northeast Turkey. Pomegranates also thrive in the drier climates of California and Arizona, and have been cultivated throughout the Middle East, Southern Asia, and the Mediterranean region for several millennia. Carbonized exocarp of the fruit has been identified in Early Bronze Age levels of Jericho in the West Bank, as well as Late Bronze Age levels of Hala Sultan Tekke on Cyprus. A large, dry pomegranate was found in the tomb of Djehuty, the butler of Queen Hatshepsut in Egypt; Mesopotamian cuneiform records mention pomegranates from the mid-third millennium BC onwards.