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GENERAL NEWS


Nick Livanos Discusses Molyvos and Continuing the Family Legacy of Greek Hospitality

May 5, 2023

By Eleni Sakellis < https://www.thenationalherald.com/my-staff-details/?author=view-post&auth_id=129443>

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The Livanos family outside Ousia in 2019. Photo by Eleni Sakellis

NEW YORK – Owned and operated by the Livanos (family) Restaurant Group, Molyvos, a beloved Greek restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, is celebrating 25 years with a new location, new aesthetic, and expanded menu. Relocating to the former Esca space in Hell’s Kitchen on 43rd Street and 9th Avenue, Molyvos has reopened with a fresh perspective that showcases the blend of modern energy and ancient culture that make Greece one of the most spectacular places in the world.

The Livanos family and designer Chris Kofitsas have completely reimagined Molyvos with a light, modern aesthetic, and energetic vibe that pays homage to the family’s Greek heritage and ancestry. With 60 seats indoor and a patio that can accommodate up to 40, Molyvos is a vibrant addition to the Hell’s Kitchen community.

The restaurant has always been known for its exceptional, classic Greek cuisine, and that tradition continues in the new location – along with the addition of dishes that capture the current ethos of the culinary scene in Greece.



Owned and operated by the Livanos (family) Restaurant Group, Molyvos, a beloved Greek restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, is celebrating 25 years with a new location, new aesthetic, and expanded menu. Photo: Livanos Restaurant Group

Molyvos, a town on the island of Lesbos, is the ancestral home of the Livanos family – where they still have a house that has been in the family for 105 years. “Our family’s house in Molyvos originally belonged to my father’s grandmother, it’s such a treasure, and we still visit every summer,” said Nick Livanos, who spoke with The National Herald about Molyvos’ new location, the challenges and rewards of running a family business, and continuing the family legacy of Greek hospitality.

That legacy began in 1957, when John Livanos immigrated to the United States from Greece and began his career as a dishwasher working for his uncle in Manhattan, as noted on the Livanos Restaurant Group website. He purchased his first restaurant in 1960, and later opened the elegant Livanos Restaurant in White Plains, NY, in 1985.

John and his children, Nick, Bill and Corina, now own and manage the critically acclaimed restaurants Oceana and Molyvos in New York City, as well as Moderne Barn in Armonk, NY, and City Limits in White Plains, NY.

Nick, the eldest of the Livanos siblings, grew up working in the family's restaurants during the school year and spending his summers in Greece. Coming from a family of talented cooks and a long line of commercial fishermen, Nick soon fell in love with food with the concepts of freshness and quality as the foundation of his culinary expertise. Nick graduated from Adelphi University with a bachelor's degree in management, but his life changed when, on a whim, he decided to visit the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY, and later enrolled. Today, Nick oversees the business of all Livanos restaurants, sharing duties with Bill and Corina. In 2016, the third generation of restaurateurs, Nick's eldest sons, Johnny and Enrico, joined the family business.



The Livanos family at a gathering a few years ago. Photo: Livanos Restaurant Group

TNH: What was it like moving to the Molyvos' new location?

Nick Livanos: After 24 years on 7th Ave it was bittersweet to consider moving. But we had no choice when the landlord informed us the Wellington Hotel would not be able to reopen. That was the bitter part. The sweet part was having the opportunity to relocate to a new and exciting location in Hell's Kitchen!

TNH: What has been the response so far from Molyvos' loyal customers?

NL: The response has been very positive because they LOVE the new design and location. The occasional disappointment is expressed because we are no longer next to Carnegie Hall but the new location is very close to all the Broadway theatres so it brings a new convenience for the pre-theatre goers.

TNH: How are the other restaurants – Oceana, Moderne Barn, and City Limits Diner- doing in this post-pandemic era?

NL: Business is back to normal and even busier then pre-pandemic.

TNH: What are some of the most challenging aspects of running a family business today?



A snapshot of John Livanos, center, with his sons, Nick, at left, and Bill, at right, in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Photo: Livanos Restaurant Group

NL: We find very few challenges. As a group we are all very professional and are on top of the latest methods and techniques in running a restaurant group. The only challenge, if it is one, is we have no outside investors who can carry some of the financial burdens when they occur, such as during the pandemic. But that just makes us stronger.

TNH: What are some of the most rewarding aspects?

NL: Working with my siblings and most of our children, (there are 10 grandchildren) all have worked at some point in the restaurants with two of my sons working full time. And having our parents around, John and Chrysa, who have dedicated their whole life to the restaurants (60 plus years) has been the most rewarding.

TNH: How does your Greek heritage influence your life and work?

NL: It totally has influenced our dedication and work ethic. We are the second generation that has followed the wave of immigrants from Greece and we continue to maintain the reputation of restaurateurs of Greek descent who are the best of the best in the hospitality industry. We are so proud to hear and read about all our fellow Greeks. Just look at all the Greek restaurants that are opening throughout the country. It took some time because it wasn't what the Greek operator first did, but now it's an explosion of Greek eateries that keeps going and going.



The Livanos family outside Ousia in 2019. Photo by Eleni Sakellis

TNH: How is the family continuing the legacy of Greek hospitality?

NL: My oldest son, Johnny, has introduced to the U.S. and Greek market, Stray Dog Wild Gin, made in Northern Greece. It won the prestigious award of the Double Gold Medal at the San Francisco Spirit Tasting. It is made with Greek Botanicals and is distinctly Greek.

TNH: What are some of the most important lessons that have been passed down through the generations?

NL: As cliché as it sounds, nothing replaces the hard work ethic that started with our dad, John Livanos and whom all the grandchildren have had as an example and do their best to emulate.

Molyvos is located at 402 West 43rd Street in Manhattan. More information is available online: <https://www.molyvos.com/> < <https://www.molyvos.com/> > .



The poster for Family Food Fight featuring the Livanos family was on display at Ousia. Photo by Eleni Sakellis



Owned and operated by the Livanos (family) Restaurant Group, Molyvos, a beloved Greek restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, is celebrating 25 years with a new location, new aesthetic, and expanded menu. Photo by Jeenah Moon



One of the delicious items on the menu at Molyvos. Photo: Livanos Restaurant Group



Kalamari, one of the delicious items on the menu at Molyvos. Photo: Livanos Restaurant Group

