

# ATL



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Grecian Gyro employees, Jonathan Lopez (from left), Lakita Wilson, Staccatto Stidwell and Shaka Cooper, pose for a photo with restaurant owner, Nick Koulouris. Koulouris has owned the Greek restaurant, near Hartsfield-Jackson, for 29 years.

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WITH

## ALL IN THE FAMILY GREEK DINER POPULAR WITH AIRPORT WORKERS

Patrons who come inside Grecian Gyro, in Hapeville, are warmly greeted by owner Nick Koulouris, a man who has been dedicated to his restaurant for 29 years, according to his son and restaurant co-owner, George Koulouris.

Nick Koulouris approached a table where two Atlantic Southeast Airlines (ASA) pilots were enjoying their meals recently. The owner

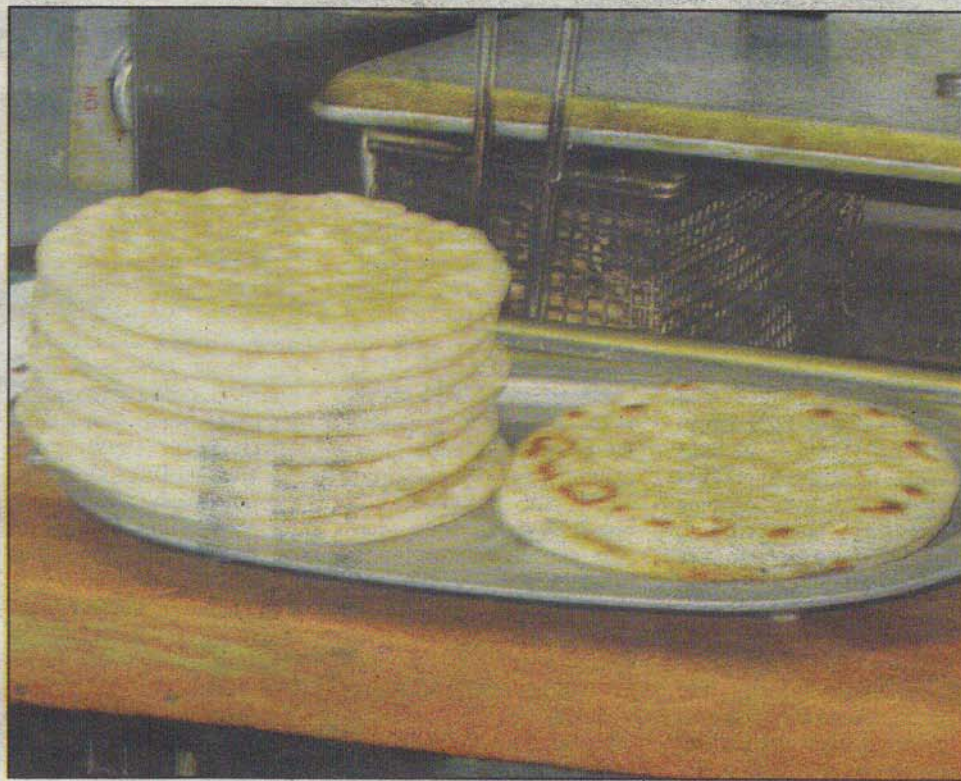
greeted his patrons and decided to teach them a couple of Greek words.

Pilot Oleg Zvonaryov said he has been a customer of the restaurant for four years, and comes to the Grecian Gyro every chance he gets.

The restaurant is located at 855 Virginia Ave., and is about five minutes from Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.



Staccatto Stidwell, a cook at Grecian Gyro, prepares a gyro plate. The restaurant is located near Hartsfield-Jackson. Photo by M.J. Subiría Araúz



Pita bread is prepared at Grecian Gyro, in Hapeville. The airport-area restaurant has been open for 29 years. Photo by M.J. Subiría Araúz

“You can tell he [Nick] takes a lot of love and care to the food, because I’ve gone to a lot of Greek places and this is the Greek place that I always compare them to, and nothing even comes close,” said Zvonaryov.

George Koulouris said the restaurant also gets customers from other airport agencies and airlines. Passengers also eat there, he said. When a passengers on a layover stops in, “we call them Grecian Gyro layovers,” he said.

Customers enjoy Nick Koulouris’ Mediterranean sauce, a secret family recipe, said son George. “It’s a really tangy, creamy sauce,” he explained. “You can taste herbs and garlic in it.”

The co-owner said that what keeps customers coming back is the fresh food his father provides. The produce comes from the Atlanta State Farmers Market, in Forest

Park. “We make deliveries from the Farmers Market,” he said.

The restaurant’s menu includes gyros; souvlaki, grilled pork tenderloin marinated and sliced; and loukaniko, grilled smoked sausage strips, said George Koulouris. A patron can get a Grecian wrap for under \$5, he said.

The meat is also fresh, he stressed. “The chicken, sirloin steak and pork comes farm fresh,” he added. “The chicken, we get it two days after the chicken is killed.”

He said his father was born in 1950, in Kalamata, Greece, a small town. Nick, who is the youngest of nine children, enjoyed cooking as a boy and had a humble upbringing, he said.

Nick Koulouris joined the Greek military in 1970, and became a cook. After he completed his time in the military, he immigrated to the



Nick Koulouris stands in front of his 29-year-old Greek restaurant near the Atlanta airport. Koulouris is the owner of Grecian Gyro, in Hapeville, and has two other locations in metro Atlanta. Photo by M.J. Subiria Araúz

U.S., in 1973. George Koulouris said his father decided to settle in Atlanta, because his family was there.

“He was definitely chasing the American dream,” George Koulouris said. “Greece, at that time, had limited opportunities.”

Nick Koulouris worked many odd jobs and saved money, with a goal of opening his own restaurant, said George. “He saw the opportunity to open a spot in Hapeville, and he did,” he said.

George Koulouris said Grecian Gyro was a one-man shop when his father opened it in 1982.

“It just took off in the community,” he said. “We had a lot of airport support, airport business.”

George, the eldest of three sib-

lings, said he was persuaded by his younger brother, Pano Koulouris, to join the family business. In 2007, the brothers quit their day jobs and applied their skills to assist their father.

George Koulouris said they took the business to the next level and expanded the restaurant to Forest Park and Tucker, by 2008. The brothers worked on making Grecian Gyro into a franchise in 2009. By 2010, the restaurant became a franchise company and this year the restaurant has launched its franchise sales, he said.

George Koulouris added that sister, Maria Koulouris, is the manager at the Tucker location, and his mother, Chris Koulouris, works the cash register there.



Nick Koulouris (clockwise from left), owner of Grecian Gyro, teaches patrons Juston Taul and Oleg Zvonaryov some Greek words. Taul and Zvonaryov are pilots for Atlantic Southeast Airlines and eat at the restaurant often. Photo by M.J. Subiria Araúz



Shaka Cooper (left), manager at Grecian Gyro, takes orders from customers. The Greek restaurant is located in Hapeville, near the Atlanta airport. Photo by M.J. Subiria Araúz