



A bit of Hollywood at the Cafe Bido

IF YOU were passing a Sans Souci cafe one day recently and thought you saw a famous Hollywood star enjoying coffee and cake, you weren't seeing things.

That really was Nia Vardalos, star of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, visiting Cafe Bido in Rocky Point Road. Look inside and you will see Nia has signed the movie posters on display.

Obviously, Nia was in Australia to promote her new film *My Life in Ruins*, opening in cinemas today. But why Sans Souci?

Because the owner/manager of Cafe Bido is Nick Vardalos and Nia is his big Greek sister.

Originally from Winnipeg in Canada, Nick moved to Australia with his shire bride, Alexandra Cassamatis, whom he met when she visited Canada with some Vardalos cousins from Australia.

Big fat Greek weddings seem to run in the family. Nick and Alexandra had one and so did Nia and her American actor husband, Ian Gomez.

"That first big movie is actually an amalgam of funny stories from Vardalos family weddings," Nick said.

"There is a scene in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* when the groom is given some embarrassing Greek language tips by the bride's brother.

"That really happened."

My Big Fat Greek Wedding became a worldwide phenomenon after its release in 2002.

For a film with a \$5 million budget, it went on to earn \$400 million worldwide and gained Nia Vardolis an Academy Award nomination for best original screenplay.

"Nia has been very generous to us," Nick said.

"She flew us to Los Angeles for the Academy Awards and we were in the audience.

"She didn't win, but we did meet the producer of the film who was Tom Hanks. He was such a nice man."

Nick's Cafe Bido is at 371a Rocky Point Road, Sans Souci.

caption: Greek language tips: Nick Vardalos and wife Alexandra at Cafe Bido. Picture: Chris Lane

Ripe tomatoes are major ingredient in Greek salad

Greek salad makes a beautiful addition to any main dish and it's a great time of the year to make use of ripe tomatoes and cucumbers. Not only is this recipe delicious, but also quite nutritious!

The June 2009 addition of Good Housekeeping had a wonderful celebrity recipe, "Melina Kanakaredes's Greek Salad." It was a great success at my house and I believe it will be at yours too!

Here's the recipe. Add it to your



file!

Melina Kanakaredes's Greek Salad

- 3 large ripe tomatoes (about 1 1/2 lbs.), seeded and chopped
- 1 seedless cucumber, unpeeled,

sliced and quartered

- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 c pitted Kalamata olives
- 1/4 c olive oil
- 1 T chopped fresh oregano leaves
- Salt and pepper
- 6 oz feta cheese, crumbled

In large bowl, combine tomatoes, cucumber, onion and olives. Add oil, oregano, 1/2 t salt and 1/8 t pepper. Toss to coat. Sprinkle with feta cheese and enjoy!

Note: I used a regular cucumber, instead of seedless, and substituted 2 t. Italian seasoning in the place of fresh oregano leaves.

NATALIA D'MORIAS

'In minutes I became a modern-day leper'

AS HER flight reached Beijing airport 10 days ago, Natalia D'Morias gathered her belongings - and ticked a box on her immigration card indicating she had a stuffy nose.

The 25-year-old from Seven Hills was looking forward to a 10-day tour, travelling from Beijing to Shanghai with her parents, brother and sister-in-law to celebrate her mother's 60th birthday. Within minutes of leaving the plane, Ms D'Morias was surrounded by masked men and escorted to a private room for preliminary medical testing. She was then bundled into an ambulance for a high-speed dash to hospital, flanked by four security cars.

"I was officially a national emergency," she said. "My conversation with the doctor gave me no indication of the severity of my situation. The ambulance ride, however, told me everything I needed to know.

"In a matter of minutes I had become a modern-day leper: a life-sized, walking, talking, five-foot-two inch, 52-kilogram germ."

Ms D'Morias's parents, Jeanne and Vic, booked into their hotel, cancelled the tour but were forbidden from seeing her. Admitted overnight, Ms D'Morias



Shaken by the experience ... Natalia D'Morias, 25, from Seven Hills, on a holiday in Greece, and (inset) one of the doctors tending to her at a Chinese hospital.

"In a matter of minutes I had become a modern-day leper: a life-sized, walking, talking, five-foot-two inch, 52-kilogram germ."

was told the next morning she had tested positive for swine flu and rushed by more masked paramedics to Beijing Ditan Hospital.

She spent seven days in isolation, was served food and drinks through a small window and was treated by doctors and nurses wearing masks and bodysuits.

Staff took daily urine samples and mouth swabs, took

her temperature every three hours and gave her Tamiflu twice a day. She was fed pizza, burgers and fried chicken, but could not communicate with the staff or understand anything on TV.

"I have been stunned by the way I've been treated when Australians are so blasé about swine flu. For weeks before coming on this holiday I've seen peo-

ple coughing and sneezing on the train every day and I have no doubt that's how I caught it - but here the reaction has been extreme and bizarre."

Ms D'Morias was reunited with her parents late on Friday. She is due back at work on Tuesday and has been told she cannot claim for losses because the travel insurance, acquired when she bought her tickets using her credit card, does not cover pandemics. A spokeswoman for Zurich Insurance, which provided Ms D'Morias's cover, said credit card policies were amended in February to exclude pandemics in light of avian flu - months before

swine flu swept the world. "My advice would be that people should probably invest a few hundred dollars on stand-alone travel insurance not linked to their credit card if they are worried about swine flu."

Ms D'Morias, a seasoned traveller, said: "That's officially the last time I'm honest on any airport documentation."