

Greece tries anew to tighten smoking ban



ATHENS, Greece — The Greek government took advantage of World No Smoking Day Monday to announce new plans to ban smoking in public places, although Greeks have proved resistant to previous crackdowns. “This total ban will be applied to all public places, at work, in restaurants, cafes and bars,” the health minister said in a statement, as the government tried to tighten an already existing but often defied ban.

Casinos and night clubs over 300 square metres (3,229 square feet) are temporarily exempt from the September ruling, given an extra eight months to make the necessary changes. A bill in preparation should also extend the ban on outside tobacco advertising, to cinemas and street campaigns that hand out free cigarettes.

It is the government’s third attempt to implement a tobacco ban since 2002, the latest coming into effect in July 2009, but with few checks or disciplinary measures in place, Greeks have been quick to break the law.

Over 40 percent of people smoke in Greece, which is the second biggest producer of tobacco in Europe.

Culinary trends

Tentura: the traditional digestif from Patras



PATRAS IS famous for its mavrodaphne, a sweet fortified wine produced from the indigenous black grape variety of the same name. Less well known is the digestif tentura, made from mavrodaphne wine infused with cloves, cinnamon and nutmeg. The recipes vary from one distillery to the next, but the tradition of serving tentura is well entrenched in Patrian hospitality. The **Pilavas** distillery in Achaia has been producing **ouzo and tentura** by traditional methods for more than 60 years. Pilavas tentura perfectly balances the sweetness of the mavrodaphne with aromatic spices resulting in a smooth digestif, an ideal finish to an evening of over indulgence. Pilavas tentura is available at all good liquor retailers.

Distillery Pilavas

The Pilavas family has been distilling ouzo, brandy and a variety of liqueurs for three generations. Our recipe has remained the same for nearly 60 years: fine ingredients, double distillation and lots of patience.

State-of-the-art technology. Certified excellence.

Our family-owned 3,500m² plant in Patras, featuring state-of-the-art distilleries and ultra-modern bottling machines, allows us to produce 6,000 bottles per hour.

Currently, our products are being exported to Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Bulgaria, FYROM and Cyprus.

They’re also available in many duty-free shops and on board ships operated by Minoan Lines, ANEK, Superfast Ferries and Strintzis Lines.

Piece of cake

THE ELLIOTT siblings are not your typical Greek-American family. Growing up in a beautiful stone house built in the 1880s in Kifisia, Stephen, Maggie and Lucy spent their summer holidays in New York. The idyllic childhood, with memories of American cakes and pies, was the inspiration for the creation of their shop, called appropriately enough, Cake.

The self-explanatory name was purposefully chosen to represent the Elliott values of unpretentious and genuine homemade products. The philosophy at the pastry shop is simple, according to Lucy Elliott. “At Cake we bake cakes as we bake at home.”

This concept permeates every element of the business. The design of the stores is based on the Elliott’s kitchen in Kifisia. The black and white tiles, the homey pastel greens, the artwork on the walls and the abundance of cookbooks form a replica of the kitchen where the Elliott children grew up. Just stepping into the store it is easy to imagine the smiling young faces, an apron-clad mother and a big bowl of cake batter.

The Athens connection

The Elliotts are the product of a Greek-American family with strong roots in Athenian culture. Maternal grandfather, Spiros Vassiliou, was a famous artist whose house on Webster Street, Athens, has been transformed into a museum of his works.

Father Sloane Elliott arrived in Athens in 1964 and was so captivated by the country and culture that he stayed and established The Athenian, a monthly English-language periodical that ran for over 30 years. With such prominent role models, it is not surprising that the Elliott children sought to make their mark on Greek society. Maggie is an artist, whose work decorates the stores, and Lucy is a child psychologist. Regardless of their professional backgrounds, the sisters have instilled their passion for baking into Cake. In a typically modest moment, Lucy says: “Maggie is the talented one. She has an amazing talent for baking. She can put together ingredients to come up with something truly amazing.”



The Americana concept of Cake makes it a unique pastry shop for the Greek market because of both the style of product and the store aesthetics. The Greek pastry scene is an amalgamation of influences from France, Asia Minor and Constantinople. The common element is the excessive level of sweetness in the desserts.

How sweet it isn’t

Elliott describes herself as “not a sweet person” since her palate is very sensitive to sugar. The resulting cakes do not overwhelm the palate with sugar. The most popular cakes are the New York-style baked cheesecake and an unbelievably moist and delicious carrot cake. Interestingly, the carrot cake is very popular with Greek clients because it is reminiscent of traditional Greek walnut cake: sweet, spiced and nutty.

Apart from contributing her self-taught business skills to Cake, Lucy Elliott has a well-trained palate or, as she puts it, “My palate is everything for me and it’s my role to make it into the business.”

In 2004, when the siblings started their business in the tiny store in

Kolonaki, none of them were aware of the complexities of the business world. Without experience as professional bakers or as business owners they were faced with many challenges that went beyond creating amazing cakes. Finances, staffing issues and customer service were some of the concerns faced by the Cake entrepreneurs. The original store in Kolonaki and the Nea Erythra store are owned by the family. There are also franchises in Halandri and Peristeri. The process of franchising Cake was not easy because it was crucial to the Elliotts to adhere to the Cake philosophy.

Got it?

Lucy succinctly describes the choice of franchisee as “someone who gets it”.

The franchisees are fans of Cake, they love the product, they love the experience and they like the Elliott family as people.

“This business is hands-on,” Lucy explains. “If the franchisee is not willing to get his hands dirty then choose a different franchise.”

New Cake shops are currently under development in Glyfada, Vrylissia and Nea Smyrni. All three stores are to be open by the end of the year.

The expansion of Cake has not affected the cake quality because the product is produced daily at the central kitchens and delivered daily in small volumes. Thousands of eggs are cracked, hundreds of kilos of carrots grated and the process all happens by hand, with no powdered ingredients used. Lucy laughs off the accusation from an uninitiated client that they use Betty Crocker cake mix, clarifying that “the value is when you taste the stuff - you might even find an eggshell.”

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