

# The fabulous baker boys

*IT ALL started when grandfather Thodoros Papadopoulos, originally from Thessaloniki, stumbled upon the brightest idea he had ever had in his life: to colonise Athens.*

**R**ounding up an army of well-baked koulouria - the sesame rings originally from Asia Minor and introduced to Athens via Thessaloniki - he headed down to the Greek capital in 1962 and opened his first bakery on Adrianou St in the heart of Plaka. Ten years later, his son Takis moved the business to the Acropolis neighbourhood of Misaraliotou St and set up shop under his own name.

But don't you go down there looking for Takis in person. Chances are he might still be on the premises (old habits die hard), but this beautiful old bakery now operates under the leadership of son Artemis Papadopoulos, an international business graduate with an adventurous palette.

"I grew up in this place," says Artemis. "When I was little I used to crack eggs in the kitchen for pocket money! Then I learned how to knead and that's how it all started."

Having spent seven years in London studying operations management, and later marketing and communications, he runs the family business like a well-oiled machine.

"Marketing theories can be implemented anywhere, from the prime minister's campaign to your love life, so all I had to do was combine my studies with my inherent passion for food," he says.

## Mind-blowing

Picking up on new cake



recipes and little-known ingredients such as lemon grass and maple syrup, he came back home bursting with ideas - not all of them an overnight success.

"There's this really tasty recipe for a desert I thought would be perfect for Christmas. It's called treacle tart and it's made of maple syrup, ginger, raisins and different condiments combined to make a delectable tart," Papadopoulos recalls. "Try it with a little cream or even a scoop of icecream, and it'll blow your mind. But it simply didn't take. Greeks refused to go for it."

Not that the occasional failure stopped him from introducing some 20 cakes on top of his father's 29 bread varieties that have established Takis as one of the most highly coveted artisanal bakeries in town. And that's not all.

## New venture

"Hosting is another passion of mine. I love having people over and serving them food," he says. "I know it's not the best time for new ventures but



the bakery has a vacant upstairs storey, a classically beautiful space with large rooms

and high ceilings, and I've been thinking of turning my dining obsession into a busi-

ness venture."

If all goes well - and Takis' bakery is doing better than many hard-hit retail stores - you can expect the addition of a small and friendly restaurant towards the end of the year. The concept will be based on communal dining with a large central table and a small menu inspired by seasonal produce and daily finds.

The Baker's House, as it's set to be named, will serve meals twice a day and will also be open for breakfast, combining select coffee varieties with baked goods from downstairs.

"I want to create a meeting place where people will come for the atmosphere rather than the food as they'll know that whatever's on the menu is bound to be good," he says. "It'll be a 7am-11pm kind of establishment, something like a bistrot-boulangerie."

At present, the bakery is operating on the strength of its famous bread varieties, including the individual stuffed bread rolls Dad Takis introduced after a short stint in a German bakery, as well as the commitment of all the year-long employees.

Artemis currently attends at least three international trade shows a year in order to monitor baking trends and pick up on new concepts, while mum and dad remain the best people to test his new recipes.

"My mum hates the smell of eggs and my dad doesn't like overly sweet things, so they fit the bill perfectly," he points out. "If you want someone you can rely on, don't go for the people who like everything, go for the extremes. If capricious eaters like what you made, then everyone else will, too."

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very healthy.

Barley being a much more resilient crop than wheat copes better with strong wind and grows easier in poor soil. That explains why it is widely grown in almost every island of the Aegean, Shepherds and seamen staying away from home for long do not have ready access to freshly baked bread, so they take with them hard-tacks - also made of barley. When bread is baked twice it hardens and can be preserved for a long time. Bread today is sadly not that good. Cereal production, particularly wheat is globalized and controlled by a handful of companies who program how much, how and what is produced. It should also be noted that these companies produce - more or less- genetically modified wheat crops. What has been lost is the character that used to be unique to local wheat varieties. The latter may not have been as richly productive as GM wheat but each of them undoubtedly had its own distinct flavor. Products of microfarmed wheat crops - formed on the basis of local varieties, are highly in demand among forward-thinking citizens around the globe.

Article from OnBlue Magazine text: Evi L. Voutsina

