

Table talk

Siblings to open quick-casual Greek restaurant in Pickerington

Thursday, June 28, 2007

Gary Seman JR.

John and Maria Chalkias have gone from cheap labor to serious restaurateurs.

The siblings, who have spent a lifetime working for their family business, will branch out in August when they open **Feta Greek Kuzina** in Pickerington. Cousin Chris Chalkias will join them in the enterprise.

For now, they are helping father, Niki "Capt. Niki" Chalkias, run the Big Fat Greek Kuzina in Upper Arlington. He has a storied history on the local restaurant scene, operating such stores as Fisherman's Wharf and Niki's Deli. Chalkias is known as a man with a welcoming personality in the front of the house and the Midas touch in the kitchen.

Feta will take over the former Schlotzsky's Deli storefront at 1839 Winderly Lane, just off Interstate 70. It will be a quick-casual operation that offers all the home-style Greek classics, such as moussaka, pastitsio, lamb chops and gyros topped with real tzatziki.

Their aim is to keep prices low. Most entrees will be in the \$6 to \$10 range. The concept could be expanded in the future, John Chalkias said.

The 3,700-square-foot storefront will seat 125 inside and on the patio. They have applied for a beer and wine license, which is expected to be in place upon the restaurant's opening. It will be open seven days a week.

Feta is an offshoot of Gyro Express, which operates inside the Big Fat Greek Kuzina, where customers can pick up to-go orders. One difference: Feta will have a drive-through.

John Chalkias said when they were scouting locations across central Ohio, the family noticed a scarcity of Greek food in the Pickerington area.

The two said they have learned a lot about the business, working in dad's restaurants since they were children. They said they know all facets of the restaurant.

"Everybody has to be cross-trained," John Chalkias said.



By Ann Tormet/ThisWeek

Maria Chalkias is one of the co-owners of Feta Greek Kuzina, a quick-casual eatery scheduled to open in August in Pickerington.

"I've done every position except for the grill and broiler," his sister added.