

MIKE ISABELLA TO OPEN KAPNOS TAVERNA IN ARLINGTON, VA ON JANUARY 27

Isabella's Second Greek Restaurant Offers a Taste of the Aegean

WASHINGTON, D.C. – January 21, 2015 – Chef and restaurateur Mike Isabella announces the opening of Kapnos Taverna. His second regional Greek restaurant will open in the Ballston neighborhood of Arlington, Virginia on January 27. The 165-seat, 5,700 square foot space at 4000 Wilson Blvd. is a sister restaurant to Kapnos, Isabella's Northern Greek restaurant, which opened on the 14th Street Corridor in Washington, D.C. in 2013.

Isabella once again teamed up with Kapnos executive chef/partner George Pagonis, who will oversee the kitchen along with chef de cuisine Greg Basalla. At Kapnos Taverna, the menu will focus on the coastal regions and islands of Greece, including dishes from the Cyclades, Peloponnese, Thessaloniki, and Ionian Islands. Pagonis, the son of Greek immigrants and a contestant on *Top Chef* Season 12, drew on his experiences dining throughout the Aegean Islands near his family's vacation home on Paros to create the restaurant's heavily maritime menu.

"I'm proud of the ways in which we've made Kapnos Taverna stand apart from the original restaurant," said Isabella. "At Kapnos we showed how much more there is to Greek cooking than lamb shank, spanakopita, and moussaka, and I think people are going to see even more of the depth of the cuisine when they see and taste the menu at Kapnos Taverna."

The Menu

Basalla and Pagonis first cooked together under Mike Isabella at José Andrés' Zaytinya, and the trio reunited to create Kapnos Taverna's one-of-a-kind take on traditional Greek island cuisine. Standouts include swordfish kebabs, crispy calamari dressed with za'atar, and whole branzino served with braised kale. A raw bar with East and West Coast oysters is a centerpiece of Kapnos Taverna's seafood-heavy menu, along with massive towers that feature oysters, shrimp, Maine lobster, king crab, live sea scallops, marinated clams, braised mussels, king salmon tartare, and smoked swordfish.

"This menu was so much fun to build," said Pagonis. "This is food I know backwards and forwards. I grew up vacationing at a family house on Paros, and eating my way around the Aegean. To be able to bring those flavors to a wide audience in Northern Virginia where I grew up is something I've been dreaming about since I went to culinary school."

An extensive list of Greek mezze includes the chefs' takes on traditional dishes like falafel and cheese saganaki, as well as cold and garden mezze sections with spiced beets and dolmades. There will be a few echoes of the original Kapnos menu in its celebrated spreads and flatbread, and lamb and chicken roasted on a wood-fired rotisserie spit.

The wine selection boasts over 90 bottles with at least three quarters of the list originating in Greece. Greek wines even find their way onto the taps, where a crisp, floral Moschofilero takes up one of the bar's four draft lines. The other three are anchored by local beers, a rotating selection that includes brews from the likes of D.C.'s 3 Stars, Charlottesville-based Champion, and Alexandria's Port City. Mike Isabella Concepts beverage director Taha Ismail has built a cocktail list that is filled with Mediterranean flavor, including The Papa Bear, which blends rye and amaro with cinnamon raisin-infused sweet vermouth, pimento bitters and Aleppo pepper.

The Space

The restaurant's look begins with the same rustic, earth-toned inspirations used in the original Kapnos. But, like the menu, Kapnos Taverna's decor is accented with Mediterranean and coastal Greek flourishes. Working once again with Streetsense, a Bethesda-based integrated architecture and design firm, the team developed a comfortable look and feel for the space using terra cotta and other earth tones offset by a variety of eclectic lighting styles, classic Greek tile motifs, live herbs and plants, and millwork panels. The overall effect evokes an urban Mediterranean garden atmosphere.

Jennifer Resick Williams
Know Public Relations
814.659.3117
Jennifer@knowpr.com



The bar conveys a rustic, outdoor quality with its ebony-stained, distressed wood bar front and charred wood back bar. The dining area exudes a comfortable Mediterranean garden feel highlighted by a steel framed vertical herb garden punctuated with lava rock. Overlooking the display kitchen hangs a spacious dining mezzanine. In the spring, a 60-seat patio and fire pit will be added to further enhance this new dining experience.

Located in the heart of Ballston's growing business district, two other Mike Isabella Concepts restaurants will join Kapnos Taverna later this year. First, Pepita, a Mexican cantina led by beverage director, Taha Ismail, and in the summer chef/partner Jonah Kim will open Yona, a noodle bar and Japanese small plates restaurant.

About Chef Mike Isabella

Mike Isabella is the chef/owner of Kapnos and G in Washington, D.C., as well as Graffiato, with locations in D.C. and Richmond, VA. Isabella will also soon open Pepita and Yona in Arlington, VA, as well as Kapnos Kouzina in Bethesda, MD. Before opening his first restaurant, Isabella was the executive chef of José Andrés' Zaytinya. Previously, Isabella worked under Marcus Samuelsson, Jose Garces and a host of other notable chefs and restaurateurs. Outside the kitchen, Isabella was the runner-up on *Top Chef All-Stars* and he appeared on Season Six of *Top Chef* and *Top Chef Duels*. He is the author of *Mike Isabella's Crazy Good Italian*.

Location: 4000 Wilson Blvd., Arlington VA, 22203

Phone: 703-243-4400

Website: kapnostaverna.com

Hours: Lunch: Monday-Friday, 11:30am-5pm
Sunday-Wednesday, 5-10pm
Thursday, 5-11pm
Friday-Saturday, 5pm-12am
Brunch: Saturday-Sunday 11:30am-3pm

Team: Chef/Owner: Mike Isabella
Executive Chef/Partner: George Pagonis
Chef De Cuisine: Greg Basalla
General Manager: Chloe Caras
Bar Manager: Kent Marquis

Capacity: 165
For private dining events, the mezzanine can accommodate up to 50, and a full restaurant buy-out can host up to 300 for a standing reception.

Reservations: By phone at 703-243-4400 or online at [OpenTable.com](https://www.opentable.com)

Branding: The General Design Company

Media Inquiries: Jennifer Resick Williams, Know Public Relations / Jennifer@knowpr.com / 814.659.3117

###