

# IT'S STILL GREEK TO US

by ELLA MYERS

Gus's Restaurant in the hands of fourth  
round of Greek-Canadian owners



Photos by Marg Seregelyi



Current owners Spyros Koutroumanos and his wife, Fania, with Fred Schrader.

In 65 years, some things at Gus's Restaurant have changed, but more has stayed the same. That's the attraction.

There are many of the same smiling faces at the same brown vinyl booths, ordering the same specials such as moussaka and spanakopita.

But don't ask for Gus, he's not there.

There have been two owners named Gus in this retro-style diner's history.

In 1952, Konstantinos (Gus) Lagges, a Greek immigrant, opened the restaurant on Elm St. with his nephews, George and Peter Moutsatsos, and Nick Lagges.

After the original Gus died in 1984, Peter and his wife, Shirley, ran the restaurant until 2005.

(Nick owned Nick's Pier on Barry Downe Rd. for many years. Peter's cousin Junior worked at Gus's before starting his own restaurants which include P&M's Kouzzina. Shirley's sister Toula owns The Apollo.)



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When they wanted to retire, Peter approached a couple he knew, Gus and Matina Pontikakos. They carried on the tradition of serving homemade Greek food alongside all-day breakfast, classic diner specials such as liver and onions, and rice pudding.

After 10 years, when the second Gus and his wife retired, they sold the restaurant to their friends and recent immigrants Spyros

Koutroumanos and his wife, Fania.

The Pontikakos stop in from time to time, and Spyros said they approve of the way things are being done.

As it turns out, owning Gus's is a great way for Spyros and Fania to meet their neighbours.

"Every day we meet new people, and you hear new stories, they grew up here," said Spyros. They seem to know half of the customers who walk through the door.

It was a steep learning curve for the young couple who became the parents of twins the same year they took on the restaurant.

Fortunately for Spyros and

Fania, they're under good tutelage. Fred Schrader started going to Gus's in November 1974. He began spending more time there in 1975 after a strike at Inco, where he worked.

He's stuck around ever since and spends his days at the diner "doing anything that needs to be done."

"Everyone knows him, even the furniture," joked Fania.

Like many of the regulars, Schrader typically orders the special of the day. He does have his favourites though, recommending the lamb chops and pot roast.

As much as they can make from scratch, they do. While Spyros and Fania use the same recipes and plan to keep the same vintage art, including Peter's Montreal Canadiens Forum chair, they are open to some changes.

Eventually, they'd like to open a second location in New Sudbury, maybe once the twins are a little older.

For now, they're focusing on expanding their catering offers and special orders. Customers can order just about anything they make in a larger quantity for larger groups.