MEET THE CHEF

VASSILIOS HOLIASMENOS

Executive Head Chef and Founder, Kolonaki

The latest addition to the exciting dining scene in Waterfall City is Kolonaki. Inspired by Greece's rich culinary traditions, it brings the vibrant essence of Greek meze culture to life with a fresh, modern twist. Situated in the Polofields Crossing shopping centre, Kolonaki is headed up by chef and founder, Vassilios Holiasmenos, who is known for adding a creative, playful twist to traditional recipes and reimagining the flavours of his heritage.



Q: When did you decide to become a chef?

A: I grew up in the restaurant industry. As a young boy, watching my father in his restaurants made me want to be part of that world. I started earning pocket money by working in kitchens, and that was where I fell in love with cooking and the idea of becoming a chef.



The charcoal-grilled whole fish is Chef Vassilios' favourite dish to prepare on the Kolonaki menu.

Q: Did you study? If so, where?

A: Yes, I studied in the UK, completing a BA (Hons) and a culinary course at Loughborough University.

Q: What is your cooking style?

A: My cooking style is creative and driven by passion. I love exploring ideas with my team and allowing our shared enthusiasm for food to guide the process, while always keeping flavour and quality ingredients at the heart of every dish.

Q: What is your inspiration for new recipes/dishes?

A: Travel is my biggest source of inspiration, especially visiting Greece. Whether I'm in a small village or on an island, experiencing the local food, ingredients and traditions always gives me fresh ideas to bring back to our kitchens.

Q: What is your favourite dish to prepare on your current menu and why?

A: It's difficult to choose just one, but it would have to be our succulent, charcoal-grilled whole fish. I love how the charcoal brings out the flavour of the fish while allowing the quality of the ingredients to shine. It's simple, honest cooking, and the result is incredible.

Q: What is your favourite home-cooked meal?

A: Pasta, without a doubt! Freshly made pasta with a rich, braised beef sauce is hard to beat.

Q: In your opinion, what is the most underrated ingredient and why?

A: For me, it's lemon. Being Greek, I've grown up using it in almost everything. It can completely transform a dish or sauce, bringing balance, freshness and depth of flavour. With something like fish, where you want the main ingredient to remain the hero, a squeeze of lemon can be the perfect finishing touch.

Q: If you could cook with only three ingredients, what would they be?

A: Extra virgin olive oil, lemon and garlic. I'm Greek, so those are my essentials – I wouldn't need much more!

Q: What are the kitchen tools or appliances you cannot function without?

A: Our charcoal grills. They are the heart of our kitchen and bring an extra element of flavour, character and excitement to the food.

Q: If money were no object, what kitchen appliance would you invest in?

A: A custom Molteni cooking island.



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Q: Who is your chef idol and why?

A: Adam Byatt. I admire his approach to cooking and the way he runs his kitchens. He is an exceptionally talented chef, and his passion comes through in everything he does.

Q: If you could prepare a meal for one celebrity, who would it be, and what would you serve?

A: I've already had the privilege of cooking for a few celebrities, and one memorable occasion was cooking for Megan Fox at Kolonaki. We served a selection of dishes, and the octopus was a particular favourite. That would certainly be on the menu if I cooked for her again.

Q: What do you think of cooking shows? Do you have a favourite?

A: I enjoy them and always make time to watch a bit of Jamie Oliver or Gordon Ramsay. It's great to see different approaches to food and the personalities behind them.

Q: What is your favourite South African dish to eat?

A: A braai. There's nothing better than putting great South African meat on the grill and spending time with family and friends over good food.

Q: What will we always find in your fridge?

A: Feta, olives, cured meats and biltong – pretty much anything you can snack on!

Q: If you could choose your last meal, what would it be?

A: A gyro from Kolonaki, no question.

Q: What fast food is your secret indulgence?

A: A cheeky Nando's always does the trick!

Q: Are you pro or anti air fryers?

A: Pro!

Q: Any advice you would like to share for budding chefs?

A: Stay passionate, work hard and never lose your love for what you do. Cooking is a craft that takes years of hard work, dedication and discipline. Don't rush the process or chase a title. Learn the fundamentals, keep developing your skills, and the rest will follow.



Chef Vassilios has cooked for celebrity Megan Fox before and would love to serve her her favourite dish of octopus with fava purée again.

Book your table at Kolonaki Polofields Crossing today to experience Chef Vassilios' culinary delights.

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