

Dasks' cuisine makes regulars of customers

Continued from H1

when Gus and Mary Daskalakis opened their first restaurant at the Crossroads Mall. They both had recently been laid off from their jobs at the Kennecott copper mine and were looking for something to keep them afloat.

"We were at a point when it was a matter of survival," Mary said.

Using home recipes and native expertise, the couple introduced a simple menu of traditional Greek dishes. Back in those days, Gus said, people didn't even know what a gyro was.

"Almost everybody was asking me, 'What is that?'" he said. So Gus put his gyro machine in the front of his restaurant and started giving people free tastes. "People started calling me Mr. Sample."

After 10 years of building up the business, Gus, who was raised on the Greek island of Crete, was ready to retire. He

gave his two sons, Bob and Jorge, a choice. Either he would sell the restaurant or they could take it over. Much to Gus' delight, they chose the latter. Bob ran the Crossroads location until it closed last June. Jorge opened the current location in June 2004.

"I'm pleased to see that it's succeeded," Gus said.

Success has taken time, Jorge admits. It took him two years to find the current location, and time after that to rebuild his clientele. Slowly though, old customers are finding Dasks, and new customers are being converted every day.

"We sell here quantity and quality food and people recognize that," Gus said. "And I verify this by having customers here every day telling me, 'So-and-so referred me to your restaurant.' That means there are a lot of satisfied customers out there."

Marc Jenson and his co-workers are most often satisfied by Dasks' grilled chicken salad, a traditional Greek salad topped with chicken.

The dressing is Mary's own recipe. Every Friday, however, is Cheeseburger Friday for the group of real estate developers, and each orders the same thing.

"If you don't participate in Cheeseburger Friday, you don't participate at all," Jenson said. "We take this very seriously."

So does the Daskalakis family. Mary comes in to make the spinach pies herself. The stuffed grape leaves are also an old family recipe. Seasoned by experience and trial and error, Jorge can tell just by looking at a dish if it is fit to serve. And his standards are high.

"Food is all about taste," he said. "It's all about your meat, how moist it is and how it's flavored and what temperature you serve it at; these are the things I've learned over the years. You have to be able to visualize and look at it and say, 'That's not right.'"

Staying involved as a family has been a major key to Dasks' success, Gus said. Though technically he is retired and spends his summers



PHOTOS BY FRANCISCO KJOLSETH/The Salt Lake Tribune

Above, left: Gus Daskalakis, who opened the original Dasks restaurant in 1982, visits his son's Holladay establishment. Right: Marc Jenson, right, and his real estate associates enjoy lunch at Dasks. They maintain a reserved table, eating salads four days a week and a burger on Fridays.

on Crete, whenever he is in town Gus is at the restaurant taking orders and chatting with customers, many of whom know him by name and ask about him when he's not around.

Dasks has become like a home to many of its customers.

Marc Jenson said he loves Mondays, because it means he has another week of Dasks ahead of him.

"These Greeks have a wonderful culture," he said.

"They're very kind and loving and they love their food. The whole experience works for us. I always tell my kids, if we

weren't Mormon we would be Greek."

Pet of the week

Kegan is a darling 8-month-old pit bull mix. She is adorable and sweet, and she loves to play with toys. She has met young children here at the shelter and was very gentle with them, never jumping up or showing mouthy behavior. She's a kind puppy who can't wait to meet you.

Since Kegan is such a smart girl, she hopes you'll help us celebrate "National Animal Control Appreciation Week," Sunday through April 15. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the animal control officers in our community who risk life and limb to help and protect lost and abandoned pets and to keep all of us safe from dangerous animals. You can participate by entering our writing contest.

Send us a story about how our shelter or one of our officers was helpful to you or your pet. Visit our Web site for more information, at www.slcoanimalservices.org. The Big Fix mobile spay/neuter clinic will also be at our shelter at 8:00 a.m. on April 14th. Come visit cute Kegan at Salt Lake County Animal Services, 511 W. 3900 S. or call 269-7499.



Kegan

Volunteer corner

There are people in the community who need help. They can be contacted by calling CSC 211 Information and Referral at 211 or 888-826-9790, or by visiting the Web site at <http://www.informationandreferral.org>. Many of the volunteer opportunities are accessible to people with disabilities.

Ronald McDonald House: Volunteer at the reception desk for three hours a week. One-time opportunities available for families, groups or businesses.

Ching Farm Animal Rescue & Sanctuary: Help with animal care, fundraising, donation drives and education. Visit <http://www.chingsanctuary.org>

Sorenson Multi-Cultural Center: Need volunteer coaches for T-ball beginning Saturday and for soccer starting in May.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts: Lead tours for the the

exhibition, "Rooted in Tradition: Art Quilts from the Rocky Mtn. Quilt Museum" from June 3 to Oct. 15. Training provided.

Camp Hobé: Volunteer counselors, activity leaders, cooks, medical staff and lifeguards needed for summer camp for cancer kids and their siblings for the following dates: June 17-23 (campers age 6-12), June 25-30 (age 12-19) and June 18-19 (age 4-7).

DDI Vantage: Donate to the diaper and pull-ups drive. Need all sizes.

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