

'My Big Fat Greek Feast'

mixes modern with traditional

GO AND DO

When you walk into Hathaway's Restaurant in Cinnaminson, N.J., just a stone's throw from downtown Philadelphia, what is most likely to strike you is a sense of family, community and tradition — the hallmarks of the Mediterranean way of life. At the center of it all is co-owner and executive chef George Kyrtatas.

At the young age of 27, America's "Little Greek Chef" has accomplished a surprising amount in a relatively short period of time. At age 20 he was certified as chef de cuisine by the American Culinary Federation, perhaps the youngest ever; shortly after he was made executive chef of Hathaway's and in 2005 he penned his first cookbook, "My Big Fat Greek Feast." Kyrtatas may love food, but when it comes to Mediterranean food it's downright passion.

"I'm Greek," said Kyrtatas in a news release. "So Mediterranean food is second nature for me. I was raised with it; it's in my blood. It's the food I love to cook, the food I love to serve my family, friends and colleagues and simply the food I'm most proud of. But I don't believe you have to be from the Mediterranean to love the food or to make it and make it well."



The cookbook, "My Big Fat Greek Feast," blends modern with traditional Mediterranean style.

With recipes including Greek Wedding Soup, Fennel Feta and Kalamata Olive Salad, Greek Baguette Slices with a Sweet Kiss, Asiago Cheese and Kalamata Dip, Avgolemono (Greek Lemon Soup), Greek Ziti, Grilled Red Snapper Oreganata and great desserts such as Galatobouriko, Kyrtatas is ready

to put his fork where your mouth is and teach at-home cooks how to become Mediterranean chefs themselves. Forget the gyros — this is Mediterranean food at its finest.

"My Big Fat Greek Feast" is available online at www.amazon.com.

Following are samples of recipes from "My Big Fat Greek Feast," published by Small Potatoes Press, and selling for \$15.95 as a trade paperback.

Asiago Cheese and Kalamata Dip

Makes 4 cups

1/3 cup Feta cheese, crumbled

1/4 cup parsley, chopped fine

1/4 cup Kalamata olive, pitted and chopped

1/4 cup pimientos, chopped fine

14 ounces sour cream

6 ounces Asiago Cheese, grated

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

1/2 cup bread crumbs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Mix first seven ingredients in a bowl.

Transfer to a bowl or casserole that can go in the oven.

Sprinkle with bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese.

Bake until golden brown on top

and mixture starts to bubble.

Note: "This dish is one of my favorite party dishes," Kyrtatas said. "I like to prepare this dish and then put it into a fondue. After I put the dip into the fondue I top it with Parmesan cheese and a little bread crumbs and with a cooking torch, I cook the top a little. Then I pour one-half a shot of brandy on top and light it on fire. This gives a great presentation. I also like to serve this with the Mediterranean pita chips, rather than traditional breads or chips."

Greek Baguette Slices with a Sweet Kiss

Makes 10 slices

1 can figs in water

1/2 teaspoon brown sugar

2 tablespoons honey

10 French baguette slices

1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon paprika

4 ounces Gorgonzola cheese

Open can of figs and drain water.

Slice figs into small pieces.

Lay baguettes on a sheet tray.

Evenly spread honey and brown sugar over all baguettes. Sprinkle cayenne pepper and paprika over all pieces as well.

Then top with figs and Gorgonzola.

Place baguettes under a broiler until cheese begins to melt.