

Gastronomia

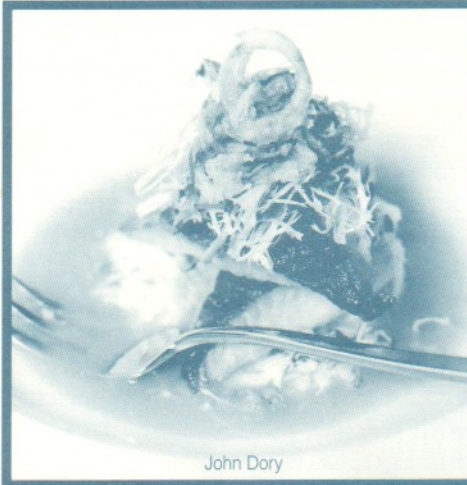
A PUBLICATION OF THE GREEK FOOD AND WINE INSTITUTE

GREEK: THE NEXT HAUTE CUISINE

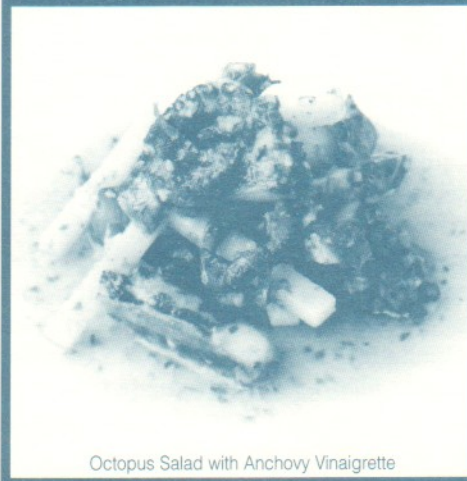
by Michael G. Psilakis
Executive Chef/Owner, Onera, New York City

Having been guided through life at the hands of immigrant parents, I have inevitably been molded to their likeness. I was taught by them that respect, integrity, and honor are all anyone can truly be judged by – and to never forget the culture and heritage that laid the foundation of the civilized world of today.

Together, these elements created an ever present pride that defines my identity as a young Greek-American. It is with this pride in mind that I began my endeavor to show the culinary world that the cuisine of my ancestral heritage need not lay in the peasant roots in which it was



John Dory



Octopus Salad with Anchovy Vinaigrette



Sea Urchin Meze

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2005

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created, but rather rise to its deserved place among the great haute cuisines of today.

As with any transition, the first step is to break the steadfast barriers that entrench the tradition in the safety of what is known. It is important to

understand that change does not come easily, because by definition, it is new. It asks us not to forget, but rather to look beyond the comfort of the recognizable. This gives birth to conflict—questions that must be answered to solidify the change and

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Onera Dining Room

© KarenWise

garner its acceptance. It is also important to understand that only through conflict can true greatness arise. History has proved this: great people, great leaders, and great minds all owe their birth to such conflicts – it is this tension that ignites reaction and ultimately innovation. My goal is to embrace this struggle – to both break the barriers that have defined Greek cuisine for centuries, as well as propel it forward to the twenty-first century.

I started by defining the parameters within which I could work. It was important to me not to lose the identity of tradition but rather bend it to provide a larger canvas on which to work. I split dishes into two distinctive categories: traditional reinterpreted and Greek-inspired. The first group pays homage to my mother's kitchen. Her cooking was of particular importance to me as I am not formally trained. Much of my inspiration is a reflection of her meals throughout my childhood.

The second group focuses on Greek ingredients, flavors, aromas and textures. I pay particular attention to these elements when creating dishes, but also give myself the freedom to incorporate non-Greek techniques and presentations. I forgive myself for these digressions noting that the French, Italians and Spanish afford themselves such luxuries and still are able to remain true to their respective cuisines.

With these parameters set, I began to create and test. Over time, I realized that most important to the preparations of many Greek dishes

is specific combinations of ingredients that produce particularly Mediterranean flavors. These flavors are very specific to the ingredients and spices found throughout the country, but there is also a regional aspect of which I was not initially aware.

I realized that, like Italy, Greece has many regions that are defined culinarily not only by their geographical and topographical locations, but also by cultural influences from neighboring countries through migration and conquest. This revelation captured what was to become the basis of my definition of Greek-inspired cuisine – to render a dish that exhibited the essence of Greek cooking, but in a way never before captured.

Over the next few months, I produced a variety of dishes including mezes, appetizers, pastas, meat and fish. The meze category traveled furthest from tradition. I decided to incorporate sashimi and crudo, a trend currently pervading the New York dining scene. I created an assortment of raw items: sea urchin on pickled beet rounds with lemon custard, *Haloumi* cheese fondue and celery greens; and a lemony scallop ceviche with *tzatziki*, pickled fennel and anise greens. My focus here was to stress Greek ingredients while using non-traditional presentations.

A seared diver sea scallop appetizer was built around the cinnamon braised cauliflower my mother traditionally served. The cauliflower is combined with wilted spinach to provide a platform for the scallop and is then sauced with a nutty brown butter, tart dried cherry, crispy caper and sage sauce. I reinterpreted the Cretan classic *moussaka* by deconstructing its elements and then cooking them to order rather than baking them together in the traditional sense. The resulting cylindrical "open faced" *moussaka* layers braised goat between individually prepared discs of eggplant, potato and pasta. It is held together by an egg-less béchamel and finished with truffle oil and braising jus.

My take on the typical Greek "whole grilled fish" cliché was to introduce an *avgolemono* foam (lemon-egg emulsion) to dress a Branzino. It is the use of this traditional soup-based emulsion that adds the necessary culinary intrigue to elevate the dish to haute cuisine. Although not a typical Greek entrée, rare Magret duck breast merits its inclusion by yielding to its sides: *Mavrodaphne* wine-poached pears, clove- and cumin-spiced walnuts, red wine-glazed sweet and sour onions, and a savory duck confit *baklava* – a play on the well-known Greek dessert.

On the sweet side, a 'Study in *Triandafilo*' (rose) incorporates the longstanding Greek love affair with the essence of rose through four different combinations of textures – *crema* (similar to panna cotta), *loukoumi* (a Turkish delight), milk shake and *pagoto* (ice cream) – all showing their respect to the floral intoxication of this prickly vine-blooming flower.

These are but a few of the dishes that fill the pages of the opening menu for my restaurant, named Onera, which translates to 'dreams'. It is, of course, a realization of my dreams, but also the beginning of a new way of understanding the food I grew up with and love. But of greater importance, it affords a means, I hope, to show the culinary world that we, too, finally belong to the world of haute cuisine.



Onera Bar-Lounge

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INSTITUTE EVENTS

From the Institute's Greek workshop and luncheon for Johnson & Wale's Providence faculty, Kathy Boulukos (center) was the featured guest presenter.



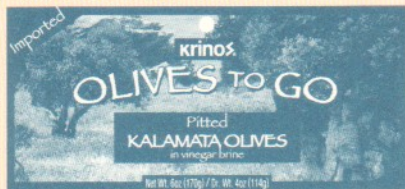
MEMBERS CORNER



◆ **Food News: Athens Foods** has introduced a commercial line of savory, pre-baked mini fillo shells. Flavors include corn, tomato, black bean and spinach. The company also

has updated its free cookbook of 100 award-winning fillo recipes. Recipes have been modified to conform to the size of Athens' new space-saving, easier-to-handle fillo sheets.

◆ **Amita** has created new packaging for its **Motion** natural fruit juices. ◆ **Krinos Foods** recently acquired **Hellas International**, importers of award-winning **Morea** olives and oils, as well as honeys, teas, preserves, and other premium products. Krinos has also unveiled a new line of stuffed and marinated "Olives to Go" in plastic pouches. In addition, the company has significantly expanded key jar lines, and has developed new variety packs of olives, peppers, cheeses and other mezes/antipasti for club store holiday sales.



◆ **Institute** member products were featured in gourmet gift basket displays and giveaways as part of an annual Greek Easter promotion with top New York restaurants. Participants included Avra, En Plo, Ethos, Kyma, Meltemi, Molyvos, Niko's Mediterranean Grill & Bistro, Onera, Periyali, Pylos, Snack, Snack Taverna and Trata.

◆ **Wine News: Costa Lazaridi** wines made an excellent showing at the recent International Wine Competition in Thessaloniki, in which 506 wineries participated. **Chateau Julia** Merlot earned the Grand Gold Medal and was named the best red wine from northern Greece. **Amethystos** red and **Cava Amethystos** were awarded gold medals. Greek wines were also well represented at the recent Wine Rave New York City. Several thousand "trend-setting New Yorkers" attended the event, which included a Greek wine seminar conducted by Institute Vice President Kathy Spiliotopoulos of Nestor Imports. Upcoming events include a Greek wine dinner hosted by the New York City Wine Club.

Kalo Paskha!
(Happy Easter)

ENTER TO WIN THIS GREEK EASTER BASKET FROM MOLYVOS & THE GREEK FOOD & WINE INSTITUTE
Drop your business card - or a slip of paper with your name, address & phone number in the basket. We will contact the winner. Drawing: Easter Sunday, May 1 Good Luck!



AT THE TABLE

PAN SEARED JOHN DORY JONAH CRAB & ORZO SALAD, CRISPY SHALLOTS & CHICORY, GOAT CHEESE FONDUE, BUTTERNUT SQUASH BROTH

*Michael Psilakis
Executive Chef/Owner, Onera
New York City*

1 butternut squash, large
1 tsp cardamom
1 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp dried fennel
1 tsp cumin
1 lb orzo
4 oz goat cheese, room temperature
1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
1 cup crème fraîche
1/2 cup Jonah Crab meat, cooked
and picked over
1/4 cup celery leaves
4 6-oz John Dory fillets
1/2 cup baby chicory
olive oil and lemon juice

For the Butternut Squash Broth:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut squash in half and wrap each piece in aluminum foil. Roast in oven until soft to the touch – 1/2 to 1 hour. Remove from oven and scoop out the flesh of the squash into a food processor. Avoid scraping any skin into the bowl along with the flesh. Puree the squash and carefully add boiling water to the puree until it forms a thin soup-like consistency. Season with the spices and salt and pepper to taste. Keep warm.

Jonah Crab & Orzo Salad:

Cook the orzo in salted boiling water, strain, and rinse with cold water. Set aside. In a small bowl, whisk the goat cheese together with the rice wine vinegar until smooth. Add the crème fraîche and season with remaining spices and salt and pepper to taste. Set aside three tablespoons of the fondue. In a large bowl, fold together the crab meat, orzo, and fondue with the celery leaves. Set aside.

John Dory:

Heat olive oil in a pan over medium high heat. Season the fillets with salt and pepper. When the oil is almost smoking, carefully place the fillets skin side down in the pan. Sear until brown and turn. Finish cooking the fillets and remove from pan.

Baby Chicory:

Toss the baby chicory with a little olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper.

To Serve:

Use medium sized bowls. Spoon equal amount of the salad into each bowl, and drizzle the remaining fondue onto the bottom of the bowl around the salad. Place each John Dory fillet on top of the salad and garnish with baby chicory and optional crispy shallots. (Recipe follows.) Pour the hot broth around fish. The broth should melt the fondue and create a wonderful "soup" - be sure to set the table with spoons. To really wow them, pour the broth tableside - it's beautiful and smells great!

Crispy Shallots:

2-3 large shallots
1 cup milk
1/2 cup flour
oil
Slice the shallots thinly, as if to make tiny onion rings, and soak in the milk for at least 15 minutes. Remove from milk and dredge in flour. Shake off any excess flour and fry shallots in hot oil until crispy. Remove with a slotted spoon and drain on paper towels. Toss in a small bowl with the dressed baby chicory before using as a garnish.

Yield: 4 servings

MOUSSAKA OF ARTICHOKE AND VEAL

*(My New Mediterranean Cookbook,
Jeannette Seaver, Arcade Publishing, 2004)*

For the Artichoke Mixture:

6 artichoke hearts, fresh or frozen
juice of 1/2 lemon
1/4 cup olive oil
4 Tbsp butter
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 lbs veal (or white turkey meat), ground
2 tomatoes, peeled and quartered
1 garlic clove, minced
1/2 tsp fresh thyme leaves, finely chopped
1/4 tsp grated nutmeg
pepper and salt
1/2 cup white wine
1 cup breadcrumbs
1 cup flat parsley leaves, finely chopped
3 eggs, lightly beaten

For the Cream Sauce:

3 cups milk
4 Tbsp butter
2 Tbsp flour
1/2 tsp grated nutmeg
pepper and salt

Bring milk to near boiling in a saucepan. Turn heat off. In another saucepan, heat butter. Add flour. Stir for a few seconds, and gradually

pour in scalded milk. Stir until mixture thickens to form a smooth cream sauce. Turn heat off. Add nutmeg, pepper, and salt. Set aside.

If using fresh artichokes, remove artichoke leaves and choke, and cook in water with lemon juice for 35 minutes. Drain. If you are using frozen hearts, follow package instructions. Drain. Slice artichoke hearts. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 300°F. Grease an ovenproof dish with some of the olive oil.

In a skillet, heat remaining olive oil and the butter. Cook onion until translucent. Over medium heat, add meat and cook 15 minutes. Add tomatoes, garlic, thyme, nutmeg, pepper, and salt, and continue cooking 10 more minutes. Stir in wine and cook another 5 minutes. Stir in 3 tablespoons cream sauce. Turn heat off.

In the prepared ovenproof dish, spread half the breadcrumbs. Arrange half the artichokes evenly on top. Spread with meat mixture. Sprinkle with half the parsley. Continue with a layer of artichoke and meat. Whisk eggs into cream sauce. Top with cream sauce. Bake for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining parsley.

Yield: 4-6 servings

DATES IN SPICED WINE

*(The Philosopher's Kitchen,
Francine Segan, Random House, 2004)*

12 large dates
3 Tbsp coarsely chopped blanched almonds
2 Tbsp coarsely chopped walnuts
1/2 cup red wine
2 Tbsp honey
1/2 tsp freshly milled five-color peppercorns
6 oz cheese, such as Kefalograviera or Graviera,
cut into wedges
coarse sea salt
zest of 1 lemon

With a sharp knife, make a small cut lengthwise in the top of each date and remove the pit.

Lightly toast the almonds and walnuts in a small, dry nonstick skillet over medium-low heat. Using a teaspoon, fill the dates with the nut mixture.

Simmer the wine, honey, and pepper in a small saucepan over medium heat for about 15 minutes. Place the dates, cut side up, in the pan and continue to simmer until warm, about 5 minutes.

Serve the warm dates with the cheese wedges and top with a sprinkle of sea salt and lemon zest.

Yield: 4 servings

NOTES FROM ALL OVER

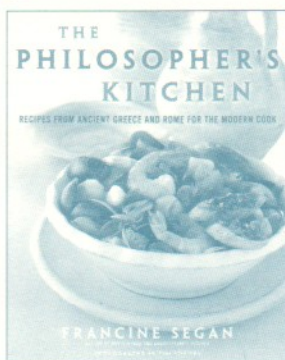
Restaurant News – **Onera** opened on Manhattan's Upper West Side to rave reviews from the press. Chef Michael Psilakis fuses current food trends with Greek flavors and traditions. The restaurant's meze selection features raw fish, veal and lamb. Other unique offerings include sheep's milk dumplings, an offal sampling menu, scallops in a cherry-caper sauce, and several stand-out desserts. **En Plo**, another new Upper West Side eatery, takes its cue from the popular Greek fish-by-the-pound formula. A mix of local and European fresh fish is displayed on ice and then simply grilled with olive oil, lemon and light herbs. A wide range of mezes are offered.

Turquoise, a successful Greek and Middle Eastern takeout shop on the Upper East Side, recently expanded its menu with a host of sandwiches and snacks. The owner also just opened a new branch of the store on the Upper West Side. An evening at **Extra Virgin**, a new hot spot in Greenwich Village, begins with a choice of premium olive oils for bread dipping. The eclectic menu features Mediterranean-influenced appetizers, entrees and desserts.

New York's Greek enclave of Astoria now has three newcomers. **Philo Xenia** offers seafood, stews, fresh high-quality cheeses and yogurt, and other well-executed fare in a cozy setting. **Ploes** joins the ever-growing list of fresh seafood restaurants. **Agnanti's** menu veers slightly off the standard course with more regional offerings. One interesting example is its *pastroumali*, a *pitta* (fillo pie) filled with beef, kasseri cheese and tomatoes, among others.

Meze Estiatorio in Boston recently hosted a celebration of Greece's Sephardic communities and their culinary heritage. Cookbook author, chef and Institute Advisor Joyce Goldstein was on hand to sign two of her books which focus on Sephardic foods within the context of Greek and Italian cuisines. Some of Meze Estiatorio's signature dishes on its regular menu include pasta salad with Maine lobster, *avgolemono* and feta; and shrimp with an orange-ouzo glaze.

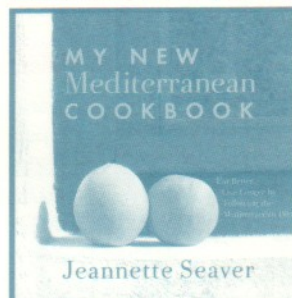
Off the Press – Inspired by the culinary legacy of the ancients, author Francine Segan hopes the recipes in *The Philosopher's Kitchen* can bring us a better understanding and connection to their lives, times and teachings. Segan discovered the dishes in writings by Plato, Aristotle, Homer and Cicero, as well as in the oldest known surviving cookbook. Subtitled *Recipes from Ancient Greece and Rome for the Modern Cook*, her truly unique book brings us back to Greek feasts, their customs and superstitions – and connects them to life today. The book has over 100 recipes and is peppered with beautiful color photos, myths and philosophers' wisdom. There are sections on menus and entertaining, sample invitations,



and background on the philosophies of seating, conversation and parties.

In *The Olive and the Caper*, Susanna Hoffman presents 250 alluring recipes gathered while cooking with Greeks over the past 30 years. In her visits as anthropologist, cooking enthusiast and writer, she was "drafted into workaday village life", first into the "life of women" in cooking and at market, and then into the "life of men" in farming and taverna culture. The resulting book is a mix of

personal adventures and engaging forays into the origins of Greek food, village life, history, language and customs. The first draft was half completed when Hoffman's house burned down – the manuscript and all her possessions with it – in the Oakland fires of 1991 (she was in Greece at the time). With the help of Victoria Wise, a former chef of Chez Panisse (Hoffman was an original co-owner), the book was beautifully revived.



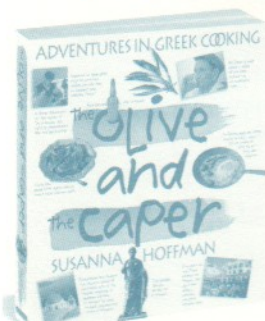
Jeanette Seaver brings delicious recipes and manageable guidelines to following the Mediterranean Diet with *My New Mediterranean Cookbook: Eat Better, Live Longer by Following the Mediterranean Diet*. The idea for the book was fueled by a 1993 Harvard University study that concluded that those who followed the Mediterranean diet for four years showed a 33% reduction in heart disease and a 24% reduction in cancer. The 200 recipes use traditional ingredients from the region. Seaver encourages cooks to enjoy the preparation of the dishes, as well as the end result, as is the lifestyle in Mediterranean homes. She also includes some sample menu suggestions. Some interesting twists on Greek recipes include Pork Loin in a Dried Figs Sauce, and Dumplings of Cauliflower Mousse in a Feta and Herb Sauce.

Miles Lambert-Gocs, author of the compendium *The Wines of Greece*, has written an evocative and lively first-person tour of the Greek islands and mainland in *Greek Salad: A Dionysian Travelogue*. A grecophile since his teen years when he stayed with a taverna family, Gocs shares with readers a host of colorful Greek characters he met on his subsequent travels and introduces them to some of Greece's lesser-known delights. The local tavernas – their food, wine, patrons and conversations – are the backdrop to his humorous and vivid encounters. The folklore and culture is revealed not only through the people but also through the foods and drinks he enjoys with them.

Misc. – **Crete's Culinary Sanctuaries** has expanded its educational travel offerings for 2005. Founded and organized by professional chef and writer Nikki Rose, the 5- and 10-day programs – which run from May to September - cover ancient history, culture, nature, organic agriculture and cuisine. Participants learn about olive oil, cheese and wine production. The culinary focus is combined with visits to ancient sites, nature treks and adventure sports. For schedules, check www.cookingincrete.com.

Another culinary tour operator, **Aegean Harvest**, has added a new destination this year: Kea. This Cycladic island has mountainous terrain surrounded by beautiful beaches. It also visits Athens and Nafplio. Aegean Harvest is dedicated to the authentic experience of Greek culture through the exploration of its ancient culinary traditions. For further details, contact Aegeanharvest@hotmail.com.

The oleic acid in olive oil has been identified as the ingredient that appears to cut the risk of developing breast cancer, according to a **Northwestern University** research team. Lab tests revealed that the acid significantly decreased levels of a gene thought to trigger the disease. Researchers caution that this may not translate into clinical practice. However, medical groups look forward to further studies and the possible positive implications of their results.



THE MAIN INGREDIENT



Honey: The Gold Standard

Some historians believe that the Greeks learned how to domesticate bees from the ancient Egyptians. Mythology poses several origins: that beekeeping is an ancient art passed on to man by a son of Apollo, or that it originated with a group of nymphs from the island of Kea. On Crete, the locals contend that a wounded Zeus was healed by a nymph and bee named *Melissa*, who then taught the Cretans the art of beekeeping. *Melissa* is actually the Greek word for bee; *meli* the word for honey. In *The Philosopher's Kitchen*, Francine Segan retells a fable by Aesop in which a bee presents a pot of honey to Zeus as a gift. Zeus, in turn, grants a wish to the bee, who requests that its sting be fatal. Disapproving of this malicious request, Zeus instead made its sting fatal to the bee.

Whatever the truth, one thing is for certain: Greeks take their honey seriously. Greece produces some of the world's finest honey, and Greeks are among the world's biggest consumers of honey.

In Greece, beekeepers change the location of their hives each season in order to produce the best flavor blends from the variety of flora, herbs and trees across the countryside. As a result, the honey is distinct in fragrance and flavor, rich and sublime. Common types include wild thyme, orange blossom, and multi-floral, but varieties are produced in the dozens. Several are available in the U.S., including Nectars of the Gods; Attiki, a thyme honey; and Fino, a pine honey.

Greek honey is frequently mixed with walnuts into thick yogurt, drizzled on *manouri* (a mild, creamy sheep's milk cheese), spread on bread, and used in syrups for *baklava* and other desserts. It is also a key ingredient in *melomakarona* (Christmas cookies), *loukoumades* (sweet fritters), and *diples* (another fried pastry), as well as many traditional savory dishes.

In ancient times, honey was mixed with water and fermented to a beverage called *hydromel*, a milder precursor to today's Greek brandies (e.g. Metaxa). Honey plays a role in traditional Greek weddings as well. Mixed with almonds and a few other ingredients into a taffy called *koufeta*, it was an offering to the Gods. *Koufeta* or simple honied almonds are still passed out to wedding guests today. Honey has also long been used as a preservative for fruits and as a coating to prevent browning on

cut fruits. Touted through the ages as a natural cure for a variety of ailments, honey contains iron, potassium and B vitamins. Natural health proponents claim it works as a disinfectant and salve for cuts and abrasions.

Honey-Feta Griddle Bread

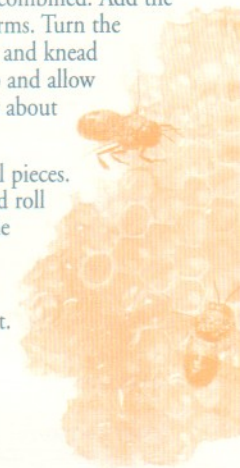
(*The Philosopher's Kitchen*)

4 oz feta cheese
2 Tbsp honey
1/2 tsp salt
1/2 cup all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

In a large bowl, mash the cheese, honey, and salt together with a fork until well combined. Add the flour and mix until a dough forms. Turn the dough out onto a work surface and knead briefly. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rest at room temperature for about 20 minutes.

Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. Lightly flour a work surface and roll each piece into a very thin circle about 3 inches in diameter.

Lightly oil a nonstick griddle and heat over medium-low heat. Grill each circle until golden, about 1 minute per side. Oil the griddle after each use. Serve warm.



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47-00 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101
(718) 729-5277
lisacutick@insightbb.com