

Mati Café Is Winning the Match

Greek twins opened a café inside a tennis club. Then the internet found them. *By Theodora Tsevas*



From left: Konstantinos and Nikitas Bouras

There's something quietly unexpected about finding a freddo cappuccino inside a tennis club on Randall's Island. No Astoria street corner, no diaspora neighborhood in Queens, just a sports complex, dozens of courts, and a menu that reads like a love letter to a Greek summer. Mati Cafe opened in March 2025, but it has already done something that takes most New York restaurants a decade: It made people feel like they belong somewhere.

The name comes from two places at once. There's Mati, the coastal area east of Athens where the Bouras twins spent every summer growing up, a place they carry with them, especially since the devastating 2018 fire that tore through the region. And there's το μάτι itself, the evil eye, that blue talisman Greeks usually hang in their homes for protection. For Konstantinos and Nikitas Bouras, Mati Cafe captures exactly what they were trying to build: something rooted, something that carries Greece with it wherever it lands. "We wanted to bring a piece of home into one of our businesses," Nikitas says.

The brothers grew up in Psychiko, moved to the United States in 2017 and 2018, and spent years working in finance before making the leap. Mati Cafe is not their first venture, but it is the one that stopped New York in its tracks. The original plan was Manhattan, higher profile, the kind of address that announces itself. But Manhattan is also, as any restaurateur will tell you, a place where ambition gets tested at an extraordinary

price. When the opportunity came through at Sportime, one of the city's largest tennis facilities and home to the John McEnroe Tennis Academy, they pivoted. And, in doing so, landed somewhere that makes more sense than any downtown storefront might have.

"We found an opportunity at Sportime, and in March 2025, we opened Mati Cafe," Konstantinos says. The pivot meant slightly adjusting the original concept, but the community they found there more than made up for it—members, young athletes in summer camps, families, and professional players passing through while preparing for the U.S. Open. A built-in clientele with daily rhythms,

people who come back not because they discovered something viral but because it's Tuesday and they want a good cup of coffee and healthy food options. That said, the viral moment did come for Mati.

A video began circulating on social media, and then kept circulating, reaching Greek audiences far beyond New York. What it showed was simple: a café that felt genuinely Greek in a place no one expected to find one, run by two brothers who were clearly enjoying themselves. Konstantinos, in particular, became the face of the operation through his presence in the videos, recognizable enough now that people stop him on the street.

The brothers are clear-eyed about what that kind of attention means, and what it doesn't. "Social media these days is crucial for brand recognition," Nikitas says, "but it is also a double-edged sword." He has watched too many Manhattan spots ride a wave of hype straight into closure, lines around the block in October, empty tables by December. The viral moment only worked, in their telling, because the foundation was already solid. They had built the clientele, trained the team, and refined the product before the algorithm found them. The attention was the reward, not the starting point. "If you don't

have good customer service and a quality product, whatever social media does for you is temporary," Konstantinos says. "We focused on the product first."

The menu is the clearest expression of what Mati is trying to be: not a traditional Greek restaurant, not a diner, not a souvlaki spot, but something more fluid. Greek café culture transplanted and adapted, without losing the things that made it worth bringing over in the first place.

"We wanted to make a clean menu that reflects our authentic way of eating and lifestyle in Greece, while making it approachable for New Yorkers," Nikitas says. "Greek coffee, like freddo espresso and freddo cappuccino, healthy smoothies, salads, bowls, and a few American-centered foods like burgers and nuggets."

In practice, that means spinach pies sitting alongside acai bowls and wraps. Vegetarian omelets and yogurt with fresh fruit for those who want something lighter. Multiple milk options for different tastes and dietary needs. A small section near the counter selling Greek staples like olive oil and feta. The philosophy running through all of it is simple: Vegetables arrive daily, everything is made to order, and almost the entire menu is seed-oil free. The ingredients are what they claim to be.

The Cali chicken sandwich has become the unlikely best-seller. The Mykonos smoothie, built around pineapple and mango, is meant to bring to mind a Greek island in summer, and for regulars, it seems to do the job. The acai bowl has its own following.

And then there is the coffee, which is its own story.

Freddo espresso and freddo cappuccino: explained patiently to first-timers, ordered with confidence by those who have made them a habit. The brothers have made a quiet mission of introducing a ritual that most Americans have never encountered, the cold-frothed, intensely flavored Greek coffee experience, to a crowd that came in expecting a flat white. The cultural gap is real: Americans rarely drink coffee after noon, while a Greek will happily order a freddo at 7 in the evening without a second thought. Mati, in part, exists to close that distance. Greek tennis stars Stefanos Tsitsipas and Maria Sakkari, both of whom have trained at Sportime, have stopped by for a freddo of their own, perhaps the most fitting endorsement the café could ask for.

Behind the menu is a research process that the brothers take seriously. Nikitas traveled to Australia specifically to study its café culture, which is widely regarded as among the best in the world, tasting his way through its cities to find ideas that might translate back to New York. The trip was a deliberate investment in understanding what great café culture looks like when it has had time to fully develop. The point was not to copy but to absorb and adapt. Every item on the menu goes through rounds of testing before it is introduced, and new ideas are always in the works.

The Hamptons location, opening soon at Sportime Amagansett, will carry the same identity but with its own seasonal adjustments, more options for the summer camps that fill the facility, perhaps ice cream or frozen yogurt for the afternoons, and the lighter feel that a beachside crowd expects. The menu, like the brand, moves with its surroundings.

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Beyond Amagansett, the brothers have their eyes on SoHo by 2027, and the messages keep coming in from Greek Americans in Washington, D.C., Boston, and cities across the country, asking for something like this near them. It suggests that Mati has found something the market hadn't quite named before: a Greek café concept that feels current rather than nostalgic, built equally for people who grew up with

this culture and for people discovering it for the first time.

The goal, as they describe it, is not the line around the block. It's the member who comes in daily, every other day, or every week because they want the coffee, the chicken sandwich, the small, reliable pleasure of something that feels like somewhere real.

On Randall's Island, at least, Greece has found a very good home.

MATI CAFE
1 Randalls Is, New York, NY 10035
Instagram: maticafeny