



George Panagopoulos

MEZŌ Mediterranean Brings Greek Hospitality to Dedham

After years of serving the community, the owner of Dedham House of Pizza is building Philotimo Hospitality Group, Greater Boston's new Greek-American hospitality group, starting with MEZŌ Mediterranean. *By Theodora Tsevas*

When George Panagopoulos walked into the vacant storefront just a few steps away from Dedham House of Pizza last fall, he saw opportunity. His family's 50-year-old pizzeria had become a neighborhood cornerstone, and it is part of Dedham's legacy, but this space represented something different: a chance to honor his Greek heritage and fill a void that had existed in Dedham Square for years.

"This opportunity came together naturally, with all the right pieces aligning to support a vision that had been taking shape for years," Panagopoulos says.

This month, MEZŌ Mediterranean opens in historic Dedham Square, marking the formal launch of Philotimo Hospitality Group and a new chapter for one of the area's most established restaurant families.

The timing couldn't be more strategic. Since another Greek restaurant closed years ago, Dedham has lacked a proper Mediterranean restaurant despite having a substantial Greek-American population and a community hungry for authentic cooking. The area is also dense with municipal offices, courthouses, police and fire stations, and a town hall, creating a built-in lunch crowd with few quality options that connect to the neighborhood's roots.

"Ever since Kouzina Estiatorio closed its doors in Dedham a few years back, there has been a real void, especially when it comes to spitiko fagito—that sense of truly home-cooked Greek food," Panagopoulos explains. "I felt a responsibility to fill the gap, but only if we could do it the right way."

In four months, Panagopoulos and his wife transformed the old space into a modern Mediterranean haven with 25 seats arranged around an open kitchen, handcrafted pottery, olive trees, oak wood, and ceramic furniture finishes, and colors of the shorelines of the Mediterranean. "I have spent years taking pictures of restaurants in Greece and Italy, the colors, the furniture, the bougainvillea outside," he says. "The furniture mattered deeply to me. I wanted people to feel that level of care, the passion and attentiveness to every detail."

The concept is what Panagopoulos refers to as "fast-fine," a hybrid model that brings elevated ingredients and generational recipes to a counter-service format, accessible, quality-driven, and built for everyday dining. "We're creating something that serves the community consistently," he explains. "Fast-fine concepts connect with people in a way that feels sustainable, both for us and for our guests. That's the foundation of Philotimo Hospitality Group." In practice, that means ordering at the counter but dining with glassware and real silverware. Someone



brings your food to the table on actual plates. The wines are Mediterranean, the beers Greek, and on Friday nights, there might be a bouzouki player filling the room with island music.

The menu celebrates Greek home cooking done right. Moussaka and pastitsio, staples at Greek festivals, are something Panagopoulos is trying to perfect at MEZŌ. “When you’re really trying to perfect something, you start respecting the ingredients,” he says. “How you chop an onion, how you cook it, it changes everything.”

Beyond the classics, there’s paidakia (grilled lamb chops), biftekia (meat patties), gemista (stuffed peppers), and fasolakia (string bean sauté), dishes that connect to a different side of Greek cooking. “People don’t connect these foods to Greek cuisine, beets, beans, greens, grains,” Panagopoulos says. “But that’s what we grew up eating. That’s what yiayia made.”

The foundation of MEZŌ’s menu comes from an unexpected treasure: a cookbook Panagopoulos’s mother had nearly forgotten about. Inside were index cards documenting four generations of family recipes, his maternal yiayia’s version, her mother’s version, her grandmother’s version, each dish preserved across decades. “I photographed everything and looked for the common denominator,” he explains. “If all four recipes used egg, egg stays. We made each version, had friends taste them, and the winner made it onto the menu.”

He credits his maternal yiayia as the true matriarch, the one who taught him everything about Greek cooking and hospitality. “My mother’s side was all here in the U.S., but my father’s family stayed in Greece. She’s the one who raised us, who taught us, who fed us. I watched her cook every day.”

The result is food that honors the tradition he was raised in, while meeting modern expectations, slow-cooked meats displayed so guests can see and smell them before ordering, traditional soups like fakes (lentil), avgolemono (egg-lemon soup), and classic Greek desserts from baklava to loukoumades. Everything is prepared with imported Greek extra virgin olive oil. “Olive oil isn’t just food; it’s medicine,” Panagopoulos says. “We source ours from Greece, from producers who’ve been doing this for generations. That authenticity matters.”

The decision to expand beyond the pizzeria wasn’t without internal conflict. Panagopoulos’s father, who passed away recently after running

Dedham House of Pizza for decades, was a different kind of businessman, cautious, content, focused on what he had rather than expanding. “If my dad were in his 30s or 40s when I told him about this, he probably would’ve said, ‘Giorgo, don’t have too many big ideas. Stay with what’s working,’” Panagopoulos reflects. “He was always risk-averse. He was blessed to have a business that supported his family, and that was enough for him.”

But something shifted in his father’s later years, watching his son pour himself into the pizzeria; perhaps he recognized a different kind of fire. “I think he would’ve been very happy to see this project,” Panagopoulos says. “I think he’d be very emotional. He’d be proud that we’re embracing our culture and tradition, especially in a world that tends to put that second. As generations go on, we forget our roots.”

If all goes according to plan, MEZŌ Mediterranean is just the beginning. Panagopoulos envisions five to seven Mediterranean lifestyle brands under the Philotimo Hospitality Group over the next 15 years, restaurants, certainly, but also concepts that embrace the broader culture.

The long-term vision? A portfolio that attracts the attention of larger restaurant groups operating fine dining empires in New York, Boston, or Chicago. But that’s years away. For now, there’s a community to serve, a legacy to honor, and a kitchen that smells like Sunday afternoons.

MEZŌ Mediterranean

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