

Angelina passionate about local food

By Judy Hogan

"Angelina's Kitchen! I hope you're starving." Like most newcomers to Chatham, Angelina Koulizakis was looking for a quieter, less hectic lifestyle. Once here she decided to open a Greek Take-Out restaurant using local, seasonal ingredients. She and her husband, John Battiste, opened Angelina's Kitchen on March 10 this year on the corner of West and Rectory Streets. John did the renovations to convert the music shop. In addition to offering take-out meals with a Greek twist, Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m., she caters for personal gatherings, local groups, weddings, and corporate accounts through the Triangle.

WOMEN OF CHATHAM



Angelina Koulizakis practices her faith in local food in Angelina's Kitchen on the corner of West and Rectory Streets in Pittsboro.

PHOTOS BY JOHN SHILLITO

Angelina was born to Greek parents in Ottawa, Canada. Her parents immigrated soon after to the U.S., and she grew up in Fairfax, VA. Her father completed his residency as an orthopedic surgeon and was one of the founders of Fairfax Hospital, now INOVA. She and her four sisters spent their summers in Greece. One set of grandparents lived in Xania, Crete, the other in Ioannina in northern Greece. Her stay-at-home mom, her grandmothers, aunts and cousins were inspiration for her traditional Greek cuisine, which emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients.

Once she'd completed college at Goucher and George Washington University, she worked at a large travel agency (Maritz) in accounting, did a lot of traveling, and later started her own agency. She also helped her father with his land investment business. When he died in 1994, she sold everything she had, bought a Jeep Cherokee, and headed west. She spent 15 years in Albuquerque, worked as a contract specialist for a commercial general contractor, overseeing federally funded construction work throughout New Mexico. She found life there cleansing and met John, but her highly stressful job led her to change her life again.

Her mother was still in Virginia,

and John's parents lived in North Carolina, where he had grown up. They bought a home off Highway 751 in Chatham. After she joined the Chatham Chatlist, she learned about all our happenings, the Pittsboro Farmers' Market, the many sustainable farmers, the Piedmont Bio Farm at the Biofuel plant, and she joined the Pittsboro team working on walkability. To make friends she brought spanakopita (spinach pies) to meetings. She considered opening a restaurant, but she wanted to be sure she'd be happy cooking every day. She worked a year at Chatham Marketplace and also some months at Donna Bianco's Our Neighborhood School Pizzeria. "I'm glad we decided to do take-out. If we'd started a big restaurant, we'd be dead now."

Angelina innovates constantly. Traditionally Greek yoghurt is sweetened with honey and served with fruit. She figured out she could use an ice cream machine with those ingredients and freeze it. "We're making it up as we go along."

Thursdays she's a regular at the Pittsboro Farmers' Market. She turns up during our 5:30 lull and scoops all the green chiles, string beans, or greens. She has already arranged to buy greens over the winter from local farmers. Recently, she catered a baklava cake for a wedding party. Her customers are

enthusiastic and keep coming back for more. She laughs. "Our secret ingredient is fresh, local, organically grown produce." Check out her website [www.angelinaskitchenonline.com] to learn of the local farm sources of her meat, goat milk cheese, fruit, vegetables.

She also pays tribute to her farmers when she sells her delicious dishes. Her energy and enthusiasm light up a room, or a rainy market day. It hurts her when she sees few customers at the market. "Don't people realize the value of the produce there,

freshly picked and cheap?" "Eat healthy," is her advice, "before it's too late. It's true: 'No farms, no food.'"

She's very taken with the new brick oven Joe Kenlan built at CCCC at their farm lab and has been trying it out. In Greek villages, there was usually one big oven where bread was baked daily, and the villagers took their dishes to bake as the oven cooled.

Do you need gluten free, vegan, or vegetarian meals? Angelina will cook it for you. You don't like greens? Try hers. She takes off the bitter edge by adding carrots, beets, or sweet potatoes, avoiding sugar. She has wonderful help: her husband John Battiste, his daughter, Josie Battiste, Kelly, Xenia Bode, and Alan Russo.

Angelina is for managed growth, solving Chatham's water and wastewater problems, and providing more opportunities for the young so they don't get into trouble. Why does she work so hard and look so happy? "I believe in what I'm doing," she said. "I want to contribute to this community."

Angelina does. For more info: angelinaskitchenpittsboro@gmail.com 919.545.5505

Judy Hogan is a small sustainable farmer, poet, creative writing teacher, and free lance editor living in Moncure.

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