



KOSTAS

At his bakery

My sister and I are the youngest kids of the family - we were both born in Athens. My sister got married here. I am not married. I am a baker and I have had my shop since the 4th of May of 2020. I have been in the baking business since I was 15 years old when I was a student in high school. In summers, Christmas, and Easter vacations, I was working. I learned how to bake through working, mostly in Athens and around Greece, in the Islands.

In all the places I have worked, I stayed for a month, some weeks, an hour maybe. There were many reasons that made me not stay in other shops. Sometimes I had problems with colleagues, sometimes I had problems with the employer. Some other times I had problems with social security from their part.

As a Libra I am fair with people. I try to be nice. Try to be polite. **But, most importantly, I try to be equal. Like a mirror.** If you are nice with me, I am nice with you. I try to be a mirror. For the people, for the others, for my mother, for my sister, for my customers, for everyone. I believe that this is the perfect behavior. Ναί.

My parents' origins are from Epirus, but not from the city of Ioannina. My mother lives here and after the death of my father, I thought it was stupidity to let my mother live here alone. So, I moved from Athens, in 2007. Our parents chose to build a house here in our village. Also, the new road, Via Egnatia, made Ioannina closer to my house.

Another reason I moved is because I can find a job everywhere. There are still a lot of bakeries in Greece. I like to bake, but mostly I like to take care of trees - like planting, cutting, all of this. But I am not so lucky, my family does not have many trees, so I grow my own. I don't have a large piece of land, but I try to make some: almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, cherries, prunes, pears... Ναί. Not hundreds or dozens. But I have 2, 3, 4, 5. I would like to keep doing this - this is my plan for after my 60'ies. First, you make a plan - this plan has to work in mind. If it works in your thinking, it can work in reality.

Baking is also a creative job. Every day is not the same as yesterday. Even the conditions and the environment are different every day. The most difficult thing in my job is to make every day the same product. Besides that, we are cooking something with yeast. **Yeast is something living: the wine, the yogurt, the cheese, the bread - you make it with something living. It is not crashing rocks. It's a very sensitive job.**

I always try to make experiments, but I know some ingredients don't mix together. I have recipes from the other shops that I have worked in, from other colleagues, and I get advice from mostly the more experienced bakers. I use recipes that are... I don't know how many years old... very, very old.

If you are working with me, you know the recipe and every day you make cheese pies, but some days I'll tell you "Be careful about this today" because of this or that. "Make it this way - warm the dough or

put it in the fridge to rest, for example". It depends on the day. It is a profession without a diploma, but it is not that simple for everyone. It is simple to make bread, it is simple to make a cheese pie, but it is not simple to make the same cheese pie every day, the same bread every day.

When I first started working as a baker, I didn't work in the kitchen - I was working as a seller outside. I was a young boy. The first days I was very shy. I was shy to ask, "Madame or monsieur, how can I help you?". But after some time, I even started screaming: "Hey! Fresh bread, hot bread, sweet bread!".

Then, next summer, I was working in the kitchen with another boy. We were making about 1300 koulouris every day. We worked in the basement of the shop - we had a small oven - and we were doing only koulouris. **I remember that I wrote on the ceiling "Head down and work".**

I remember one day I was sitting down, saying to my colleague "Please please please, don't push. Just 5 minutes.". The women who had the shop came down and asked: "What are you doing there? Why are you sitting down?". "Just a breath, just a breath!", we said. But I know that when you start a job you have to finish it.

What I have learned is that **the eye is afraid, but the shoulders are brave.**

Το μάτι είναι κιοτης και ο πλάτης παλικάρι

If you have a job in front of you, it seems like you have a mountain of work. But if you learn this - that "the eye is afraid, but the shoulders are brave" - you learn how to be patient, you accept that it needs time. I didn't have a purpose either: I was saying to myself that, because I didn't start my own family, there was no reason to make my own job, to earn money. I was making enough money for myself, but when I understood that I went to sleep when I was 20 and woke up 40 years old, I finally said: "Hey Kostas, you have to do something for yourself".



STAVROULA

At her shop ANKA

I was born and lived in Athens for 40 years. Me and my family moved here in 2011. We chose to come to Ioannina because me and my husband, both of us, are originally from different villages here. My parents are from Γρίμποβο.

Athens is a very nice place to live when you're young because, you know, **young people are like butterflies – they like the lights!** The people, the lights, all of these amazing things...! When you have children and you pass, let's say, 30, 35 years old, it becomes a very difficult place to be: there's too many people, and it's a very, very ugly city. So, we decided to leave the big city, to have a better life for us and our children. We had a work opportunity for my husband here – because of the crisis – and we came here with a job for him, but not for me. I quit my job in Athens as a real estate agent, and when we arrived here, I worked here in an office. But crafting is my life – I didn't just want to work to have money.

I have always been a crafter, even when I was a little girl. But I couldn't imagine I would become a professional crafter, and this is something I regret – I wish I had started doing it earlier as a profession. If someone had put this idea – that I can make money from doing something I love – in my mind when I was 20, 25 years old, it would have been heaven for me. But it's never too late: I started having money from my crafts at 43 or 44.

All those years I was crafting for making gifts, like making fabric dolls as presents for my newborn nephews and nieces. I still make gifts now, of course, I love to give – but it's different, you know? I was working in an office and I was crafting in my free time.

This transition from hobby to a business it's amazing, it's divine! In the beginning, you tend to price your work very low, but with time you find it. Very few people have tried to bargain my prices. In the beginning they might say "Oh it's very nice, it's very beautiful, but unfortunately I don't have the money" – this is very acceptable, and sometimes I give it as a present, when I see in their eyes, they admire the piece. Very few people over these years said "Oh, no, it's too expensive", but they might say "It's not necessary" – and it's true! It's not bread, you won't starve without it. And, if you really want, you can go to Jumbo, they have very nice bracelets. **We take these things to satisfy something inner, to feel beautiful** – but this is not for feeding you, it's not important. If it was important, we would have been open in the quarantine, and we weren't. In the narrow sense of the word, important is food. Jewelry you can find it very, very cheap – somewhere else. Here, we spend hours, we spend materials, we spend our souls: to think, to imagine how to do it. We live from this! It's not nice to spit on someone's work.

When I moved to Ioannina, I asked myself "Are there more people like me here? Can we collaborate?", and we formed a big team called "Lake Crafters". We made some bazars, Sunday meetings for two years... At some point, this team broke. As a friend said "The destiny of every team is to get destroyed" – because, you know, there are people who have their own agenda, and they want to step on you, step on everyone, to rise their work up. Anyway, this made us all more stronger.

Then I started to sell my things because I had no work during the crisis, the first crisis in Greece. I started to sell my work on a bench – I was a street artist. I did this for three years, and then – because I lived in the castle – I saw that this shop was empty, and that it was a very good point for starting the business. We – me and my family: my husband and my two daughters – rented it, fixed it, and we have it ready since March 2018. The shop is supported by all of us. The name of the shop is ANKA because of my two daughters, Anna and Katerina.

If you could see this corner before, you would see **what we have added. We added a beautiful corner – it's not my words, it's everyone elses'!**

I picked this place because it's a touristic point and it's very nice to see people from other places, to have contact with other cultures – it's not all about money. This shop is not all about buying: it's half about the good words, the good vibes you take, and the other half is, of course, money. It's important, **but not everything is about money – it's about opening your mind, opening your horizons...** I really enjoy this exchange and I really miss it now.

Even people from Ioannina appreciate it. It's not only about the five, six people that live around here: it's about *everyone* that passes by here, from everywhere around the world.

And they all appreciate this, everyone says the same, and this makes me feel that I'm doing something good. I wouldn't believe it, but they all agree with that – it came on its own.

It's amazing to have my daughters working with me, but they might find something else to do. It is very nice that they can find a job in this shitty situation. Katerina, before working in the shop, started to work in cafes, as a waitress – she knows how hard it is to work in these kinds of jobs, so she appreciates to work in the store. Her dream is to be a painter, an artist, but until she starts making money from her paintings, she can work here, if she wants. I think in this matter they are blessed.

I don't only give them the opportunity to work here, I give them skills. I have taught them, but **now we have reached the point that, maybe, they know more than me. Now we collaborate. I couldn't imagine they would become artists – I didn't know that even for myself! It wasn't in the plans.**

My husband is also very helpful, now he also started making jewelry. He had no idea about crafting, but he had always, since I met him, enjoyed tools. Recently, with his free time, he started asking himself "Could I do this? I can! Let's start!" And now he started crafting and his things are selling! And the more they sell, the more he does it and the better he gets at it. We are like this: I want, and he wants! This is the amazing thing: we are both crafting people.

I started cross stitching because of my mum. Every summer she would buy me a cross-stitching frame and she would tell me "You will finish it by the end of the summer". She would keep on asking "Is it finished? Did you do this bit today?". This was very typical for girls my age at that time. But I liked it! I kept on doing it until I was a young woman. I also knitted and did crochet – which my mother didn't know how to do, I learned because I wanted to.

Ioannina is a very nice place. It's a privilege to live here, because of this nature all around. I am satisfied. I only miss my friends from Athens.

I would like to change something in all Greece, not just in Ioannina. I would like people to be more careful with the cleaning of the streets, of the public areas, and to have a better taste with regard to our houses. I think Ioannina is a very nice town in a very nice country, but we don't pay attention to keep the colours of our houses – the land is beautiful, but we make it ugly with our buildings. It's the sense you give to the land: you can build something that is not harassing your eyes within the nature. Ugly buildings are what I would change in Greece.

Ioannina is a very nice city, with so many nice houses and streets... and people make it ugly! And I don't understand *why* – why they don't like the beautiful things. I think I will die and this '*why*' will never be answered. It bothers me a lot. And of course, this comes from the top of the society: if the top doesn't give attention, of course the people will do whatever they want.

Athens still bothers me when I go. Here, I don't like the periphery of Ioannina – it's a copy from Athens. *Why?* Ioannina has its own architecture, why would you want to copy an ugly thing to turn something beautiful into an ugly one? That's why I chose to – and I had the fortune to find – a very nice place here, a very old home.

Also, this building of the shop, we tried to make it look good, to fit with the castle. **How many people in the world have the opportunity to live and to work inside a castle? I feel fortunate about that:** to live and to work in a castle.

Me and some other crafters in the city still collaborate. We have a very good relationship in our daily life: we say good morning to each other, we drink coffee, we drink tsipouro... we have this good relationship in which we share tools, and if we need each other we can ask. But I wouldn't mind having more collaborative work happening.

It would make sense to me to connect the name 'Ioannina' to crafting. We are so many! Maybe, if I saw some serious initiative from the state or the municipality, I would take part in another group work.

Angels are nowhere. Conflicts are very human. But I like it when people try to collaborate.



OLGA

At her shop Bahar Baxe – with her mother Athina

This shop was an idea inside my head since I was 15 years old. Ioannina was a very closed city back then, so you didn't have access to these kinds of things, but now we have the two main roads, Via Egnatia and Ionia Odos, so it's easier. But as I was growing older my job was totally different: I worked in a construction company as a secretary for 13 years. Then the economic crisis came - there I was, 33 years old without a job - so I decided to make this thing real. It was not difficult to do it because people supported me for the first time, but it was difficult to open a business.

It was beautiful and at the same time I was very anxious about it. I am quite happy that I have done it because it is very important to love your job. It is very important to love it. And when you find that it's a blessing. I opened this shop in 2014. Six years ago. Back then we only had 12 flavours of tea - now we have 85.

Normally I think growing up is very difficult to take the decision and just be yourself. Because normally the fear and the things we do when we have something we take for granted we are afraid to open up and try something else - and as we grow up, we are so much afraid of this. And we criticize someone who has done it in the beginning - and if it is okay, we are on their side. If it goes bad "I told you so" stay, there. It is very risky to start it all. To start from scratch without knowing how it all will be. The crisis was the fire, the spark to make it happen.

My mother and I have a very close relationship. She is very handy, and she has knitted all of her life, and likes this very much. When she was my age - 35 years old - she wanted to do something of her own - but nobody pushed her. In her life, she didn't do what she was dreaming about, so when I was about to open this shop, she was the first to support me: "If it goes bad, it goes bad - but in life you can say that you tried.". We started together from the beginning. Me in front, but she is like the angel. She believes in dreams.

We are from a village in Tzoumerka, called **Χουλιαράδες**. But I was born in Ioannina, and so was my mother. I have two older brothers and I am the youngest. My mother wanted a daughter, so she didn't believe I was a girl until she saw it. In Ioannina it is usually said that the boys are worshipped: normally, they say, you have one kid - the boy - and then a girl. The point is to have boys.

I have lived in Ioannina my whole life. Until I was 16, I was going to my village every summer. **I was a very fortunate kid to grow up in a village, in nature.** There were a lot of the herbs and things around that we were collecting everyday for grandma. We helped her in making pies or tea. It was very natural and I am still curious about things that exist around the world - spices, teas, superfood - very curious to try them, to understand why they have them and how they work. I like to taste.

I learn this by myself. I study very hard: I try to keep up through sites, shows, notes from older people. This is why I don't like to have something in the shop I don't know.

The point of this shop is not for you just to come, purchase, leave and never be seen again. The point was always for people to come here, talk, and feel relaxed. If you are happy or sad, I want to know. For this shop to be a place you can come and have a smile.

This is the difference between large and small shops. In a supermarket there's lots of things at very good prices, but you lose this, you lose to ask, you lose the colors and the different nuances. This is the reason I think small shops have to present. Personality, from my traveling through the years, this is what I love in everywhere that I have been: Shops and places that have personality. To see something that is alive. Not something that is copy paste. I like personal relationships. I like to talk about why you like to drink chamomile in the evening. I Like people.

I choose to live in a city, so I choose to live with people - human beings. So, I want to have this connection. Of course, money is very important, but it's not the only target. If you focus on doing your job well and to have personality in your shop, in the street, the money will come. The people will support you. I think it is very simple.

Ioannina is a small city in the whole Greece - even smaller in the whole of Europe, and even smaller in the whole world. So, I find it very stupid to be in Ioannina but to try to act and dress like you're living in New York. We forget our identity. There is so much potential in this city - its location, its history, and its culture. Ioannina is very beautiful, and it could be even more. It has so many nice things around! It has mountains, it has rivers, it is near the sea. It's an historical city - so many things to do and to show. And it could have a lot of small and different shops with identity. We are running very fast - we are trying to be like Athens.

I think Ioannina has been growing the last 10 years: we have students, we have tourism, they come, they leave the money, and they go - and we forget about them. "Take the money" - this is not the point.

The first day we opened the shop - on Monday the 14th of September 2014 - 3 boys came inside. They were from Switzerland and the night before they had gone out drinking, so they had a stomachache. I gave them something nice, we had a little chit chat and they left. Three years later, two boys came inside the shop - I couldn't remember them - and they started telling me "you gave us this and that and that". They were the same. They came to walk in Zagori and remembered to come again - this is the magic.

More than feeling that I, with the shop, can give something to people, **I mostly feel that I take a lot of things from the people - I take lots of love, lots of support, lots of energies. It's healthy.** I have made friendships throughout the years, and it's nice people knowing you - knowing you by your name. In the beginning this was very strange - because in the office, in the company, I was invisible - but when I started here, people were asking me about me. Slowly, I realised that this was the relationship I was looking for.

I think honesty is what people mostly appreciate. I am not polite because I have to: I am polite - first of all, for myself - and because I like to be nice to people. This is kind of a way of living, a philosophy about life.

I feel I am gathering different feelings, different ways of living, and ways of managing and solving problems. What people used to do... Jasmine in the clothes to make them smell good. Lavender in the bags. They used to put a bit of nutmeg in the milk of babies for them to sleep. I think all of these things are very interesting.

You travel without leaving: while, when I was younger, my grandmother made me chamomile tea when I was sick, another kid somewhere in the world was eating fresh coconut to feel good. A culture from everyday life. The story of yourself, and the true story of where you are - what happens around you; what your dreams are; to be a nice person in this life and to gain things - that is only feelings. **The only thing you can gain is hugs and kisses.**

You can travel in many ways - by your heart, by your mind, by reading, by watching pictures, by dreaming. I think you can do that. You must be open to take what people are going to give you.

You're giving and receiving. It's the connection.



STAVROULA

At her shop Traditional Grocery – Metsovo Cheese

I have lived in Ioannina for 30 years – I grew up in the castle. I studied Primary Education Studies, but I decided to open this shop, because cheese is in the family. **My family has worked 45 years in the cheese business.** My father has his own business where he makes cheese, and now we have opened this shop with traditional products for me.

I am from Metsovo, my origins are from there, but I was born in Ioannina. We live in Ioannina, but we still have a relationship with the town. I understand *vlahi*. My parents speak it. They used to speak it together in order for us kids not to understand what they were saying. But in the end, we started to learn and understand the language. But my parents use it with each other in their daily life.

I studied Primary Education here in Ioannina to be a teacher for kids, but I didn't like it, and I decided to make my own shop. In Greece people study degrees even though they don't like it, but they have to.

Cheese is a very old tradition in my family. My great grandfather was a shepherd, he had sheep. His son, my grandfather, also owned sheep, and started to make cheese. Then, my father began producing cheese and started a cheese factory. And now I have this shop.

It's παλιά ιστορία - an old tradition that goes back.

My parents came to Ioannina because there are more people here and a bigger market. The cheese factory is also located in the city - it is easier to gather milk from the region; whereas in Metsovo there is not a lot of milk and it is hard to get the primary materials. In Ioannina it's easier to gather milk from the producers.

I like Ioannina. It is neither small nor big - it is something in between. I like it because I can go to all the places by walking, I don't need a car. We have the lake, where we can go to have a walk. I like the life here; I grew up here. It's more relaxed.

I think Ioannina has changed for the better - now there it's a more active city, it's more alive. There are also more tourists coming. Mainly Greeks, from Athens and Thessaloniki, but they like Ioannina. People from other countries also come here, the city is more like a winter destination. People also pass by the city when heading to the Ionian islands or to Zagori.

In general, in Greece, we have destroyed our buildings. They don't take care of the old buildings. Recently, there has been a bit more thought on this topic: for example, in the castle things are getting better, even though I would like them to clean the lake, and to attract more people here.

I am young and I own this shop, but, unlike others, I have the support of my family. It's not easy, but I enjoy it. Sometimes I get anxious, stressed. You have to be careful, you have to serve the customers. Fulfill their needs. Not to have any mistakes. There's a lot of payments and managing.

In the shop I try to have local products. Some of the products in the shop are from Metsovo, while some are from other cities, but most of them are from Epirus... The cheese is our production. We have the factory, and my dad makes the cheese.