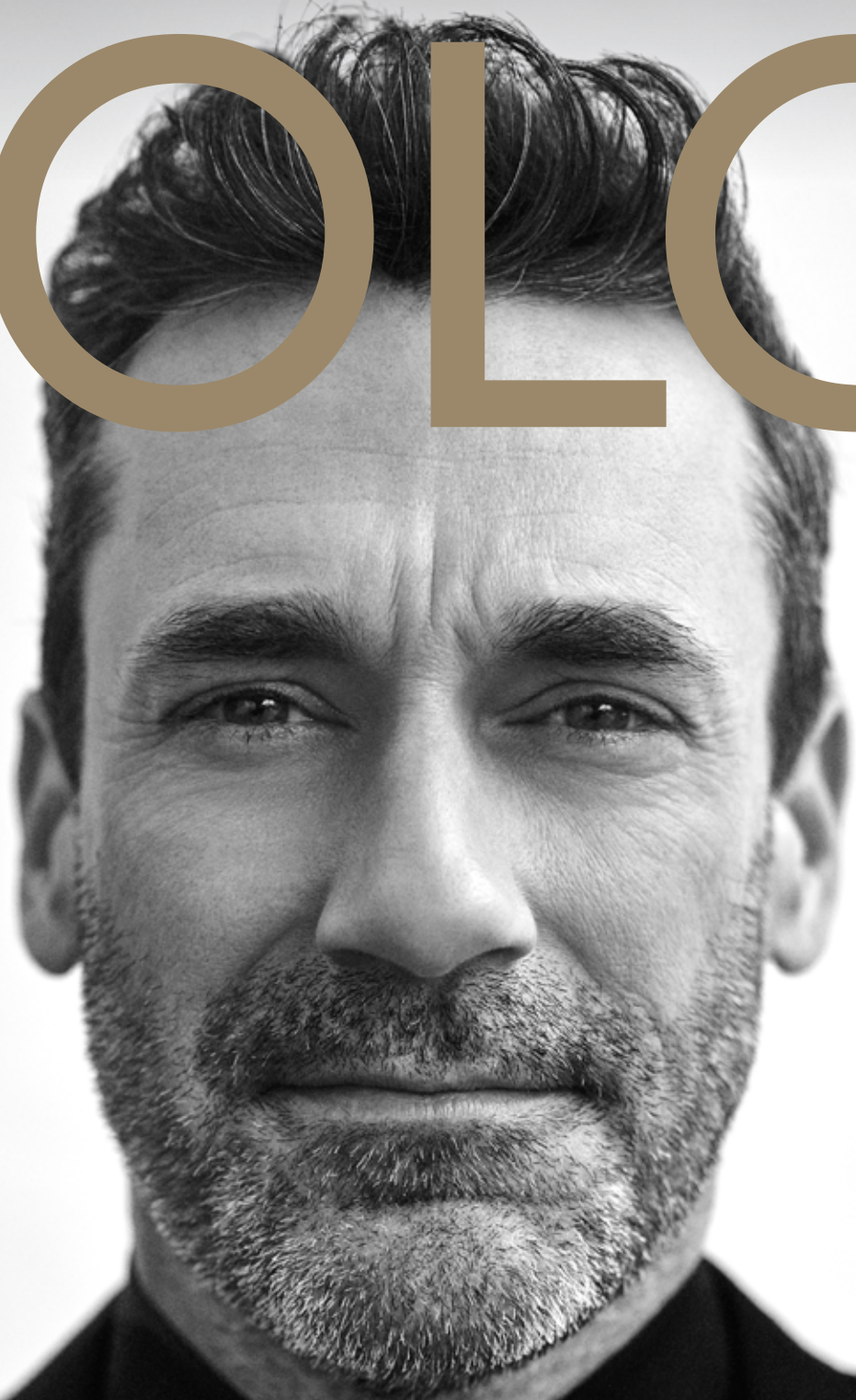


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Engaging and electric, Peter Eliopoulos has become one of Canada's most respected and dominant players in the hospitality industry



PHOTO BY JESSE MILNS

# HOSPITALITY ABOVE ALL OTHERS

The chic new urban oasis that is Petros 82 Restaurant within Hotel X Toronto on Toronto's lakefront is quickly gaining a reputation as one of the city's best new food and venue experiences since its opening this past September. Its memorable location overlooking Lake Ontario and Toronto's skyline offers a new perspective of the city, and that is perhaps not surprising given this view is gifted to us by owner Peter Eliopoulos of byPeterandPauls.com, one of Canada's most respected and dominant purveyors of hospitality.

Eliopoulos is one of those larger-than-life personalities who seems to be at the centre of every room when he's in it. And in his lifetime in hospitality, he's been in quite a few rooms, starting with a humble house party he catered back in the mid-1980s. Since then, Eliopoulos and his life

and business partner, Anna, have effectively and successfully translated their passion for celebrating life events into a number of award-winning and highly respected businesses, even being awarded Best Caterer in Canada.

With his signature grey ponytail, charismatic smile and champagne-like effervescence, Eliopoulos is a storyteller extraordinaire who loves to thread the needle through conversations with a disarming and bold confidence. "When we first came to Canada, I worked at my uncle's takeout hamburger restaurant. After that, I mopped floors and cleaned dishes at my family's restaurant," he says. "I gave my parents the money, and eventually my mother opened up a bank account for me and put extra money in it, too."

From the time he was a teenager, Eliopoulos was a free-thinking, out-of-the-box creator. An

entrepreneur with a capital "E," Eliopoulos immigrated to Canada with his family in 1967, when he was 12 years old. They came from Potamia, Sparti, a small Greek village snuggled into the base of a mountain. Tightly knit and loyalty-bound, the Eliopoulos family took up residence with two uncles and their families in Toronto's Jane and Wilson neighbourhood. It was a long way from the more familiar culture of Toronto's Greektown on Danforth Avenue. But familial ties were of the utmost importance, as was a strong and dedicated work ethic, one to which the whole family subscribes.

When he was 12 years old, Eliopoulos had three paper routes: one for the *Toronto Star*, another for the *Toronto Telegram* and yet another for *The Globe and Mail*. In building relationships with his many customers, Eliopoulos mailed Christmas



Petros 82 has burst onto Toronto's restaurant scene with its chic style and urban sophistication, hand-selected and Mediterranean-influenced ingredients, outstanding presentation and a deep cellar of international wines. It also features three elegant private rooms for special celebrations. The restaurant overlooks beautiful Stanley Gardens within Hotel X Toronto on the Toronto lakeshore



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BYPETERANDPAULS.COM



cards to each one. “The customers were amazed when they received my card,” Eliopoulos says with a laugh. “I remember, right after that, I collected a lot of money in tips.”

Driven by a passion to create unforgettable entertainment experiences, Eliopoulos’s business acumen evolved from delivering newspapers to holding dances every so often. Of course, every so often turned into weekly Friday night occurrences, and Eliopoulos, who was now 17 years old, marketed the dances as “Peter Eliopoulos’s Get-Togethers.”

“It was phenomenal,” Eliopoulos says. (A word that popcorns its way throughout our lengthy conversation.) “I rented halls to hold the dances in and charged admission. I hired DJs and live bands; everybody had a good time. In fact, I’ve kept all the tickets for those dances, which I hope to display one day.”

His creative mind and his ability to create a vision and communicate it to people are some of Eliopoulos’s greatest attributes, along with his family’s work ethic.

While working in the family restaurant and other hospitality venues, Eliopoulos also had a carpet-cleaning business and a maintenance business, but these were all a lead-up to getting back into the restaurant business with his uncle. In 1982, looking to do something new, Eliopoulos and his wife purchased Paul’s Fine Foods, a bakery that specialized in cakes and had two locations: one on Spadina and Lonsdale and one at Steeles and Keele.

“We served lunches cafeteria-style. People said the food was great, and they asked me if I would deliver food to their offices,” Eliopoulos says. “That is how our catering business got started. I see the need and I fulfill the need. That is how business grows.”

That growth has led to their current position as a leader in Canadian hospitality, with 13 event venues, restaurants and services in their domain, among them Hotel X Toronto, Universal Eventspace, Paramount Eventspace, Bellagio Boutique Event Venue, The Kortright Eventspace, The Manor Event Venue, David Duncan House, S4 Sound Sensation, Peter and Paul’s Event Catering, and Peter and Paul’s Gifts.

The newest venture in the byPeterandPauls.com universe, Petros 82 at Hotel X Toronto, has a palatable and eclectic urban vibe befitting its summit position overlooking Toronto’s waterfront, with the original name being an ode to the year that byPeterandPauls.com was founded.

Everything about Petros 82 is chic and beautiful in its contemporary style. The airy feeling of the 30-foot ceilings reflects the openness of the Great Lake it overlooks and gives Petros 82 a luxurious, serene ambience in which to relax, dine and

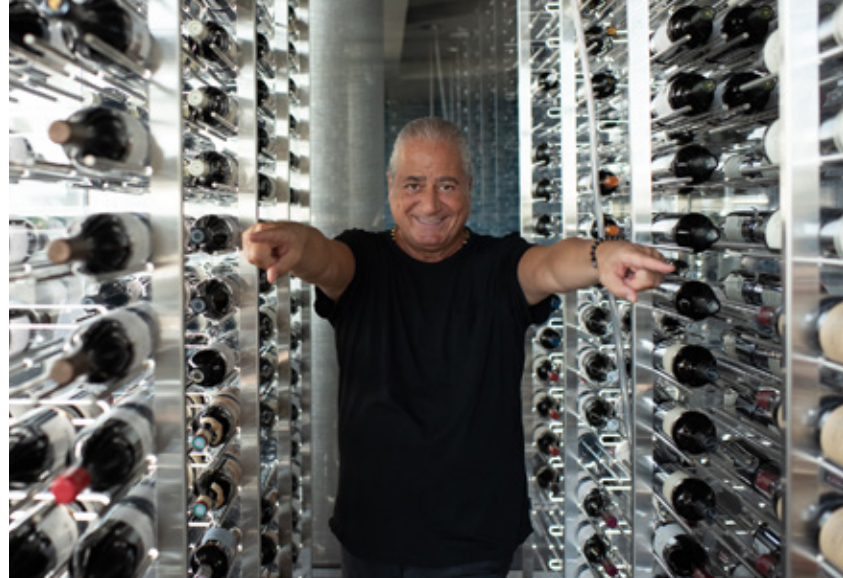


PHOTO COURTESY OF BYPETERANDPAULS.COM

This is reflected in his attachment and deep respect for his mother, Ekaterini, who will be 90 next July. “My mother was there from Day 1, from the day I started the business,” Eliopoulos says. “She is a very good cook and used to do a lot of the cooking for me. When we opened up our newest restaurant, Petros 82, I asked her to come in and assist the chef. She puts her special touch on things.”

Although he only sleeps four hours a night and his days are consumed with running from project to project, Eliopoulos still makes the time to go grocery shopping for his mother every week.

It was Ekaterini who returned to Greece with the specific intent of nurturing and expanding the family’s olive business. It is from olives that grow on the family’s property that byPeterandPauls.com olive oil is produced, along with the Kalamata olives — all of which are processed to her recipe. “My mother fixed up the land and planted more trees, both on our original property as well as additional property we purchased,” says Eliopoulos.

His three daughters and sons-in-law are actively involved with Eliopoulos and Anna in the business, who spend a generous amount of their time with their seven grandchildren, feeling that they might continue the family tradition in business in the future.

The staff at byPeterandPauls.com are an integral part of the family’s success. Many of them have worked for the company for 30-plus years. “I have extremely good people working for me. Every level of staffing is full of creative geniuses and quality people. Whenever obstacles arise in the company, we meet as a team and find the best solutions,” Eliopoulos says.

Undeniably mega-successful yet attached to his roots, Eliopoulos, who lost absolutely everything in the recession of the late 1980s, actualized his promise to himself and God that he would do something special if he and Anna bounced back from the hole in which the recession had put them. A few years ago, Eliopoulos built a Greek Orthodox Church in his hometown of Potamia. Fittingly, it is called St. Peter and Paul’s Church.

Passionate philanthropists, the Eliopoulos family has raised more than \$5 million for SickKids Hospital. They are also involved in ongoing fundraisers for Humber River Hospital (helping to raise more than \$2.8 million), the Mackenzie Health Centre and have also raised close to \$1 million for Villa Charities.

“I am a very hands-on person. I work 24-7, but I don’t call it ‘work,’” Eliopoulos says. “I just love what I do — creating and making events special.”

[www.byPeterandPauls.com](http://www.byPeterandPauls.com)

[www.petros82.to](http://www.petros82.to)

“  
HOSPITALITY IS IN MY  
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”

celebrate those special moments. The restaurant, which touts the best of hand-selected ingredients and an international wine list, is Mediterranean-influenced, owing to Eliopoulos’s Grecian roots, with its centrepiece being a sumptuous raw bar.

An engaging lounge area invites guests inside, furnished with the rich textures of grey, blue and white wing chairs, mindfully chosen to play off the colours of the lake that surround it. The main dining room is a spectacular space with elegant lighting fixtures, window treatments and an air of metropolitan sophistication. Petros 82 also features three exquisite private rooms for exclusive celebrations.

“The location is prime, the hotel is gorgeous and there is a rooftop bar where you can enjoy pre-dinner and post-dinner cocktails,” Eliopoulos says. “Petros 82 is a phenomenal experience: the simplicity of the menu, the way everything is cooked and presented. Hospitality is in my DNA. In fact, we use that as our slogan. Hospitality has to be in your soul. You have to have the dedication to create new products, offerings and events that are singular, that visualize the future. If you love what you do, each success will build on the next.”

While success is often measured in financial terms, real estate holdings and material possessions, success for Eliopoulos is defined by respecting and honouring both old traditions and familial ties.

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