

MEAT THE BEST

Among the largest meat importers in Europe, founder of the famous Beefbar chain, Riccardo Giraudi reveals his new venture on the island of Mykonos, which is about to have its first genuine meat restaurant by the sea. INTERVIEW: ELENA MATHIOPOULOU

Recently

added to the list of your restaurants is Anahi, a mythical French address in the heart of the Marais. What does this mean for you personally, and also for the Giraudi Group?

It is one of the most difficult projects I have worked on. It was there for 30 years and used to be a great place with great people, but the

food was not good. It was more of a nostalgic acquisition since I wanted to bring back all the memories I had, adding my touch to the cuisine and I also managed to hire the old manager who was there for 30 years. It is a lucky place with lucky people.

What is the greatest professional challenge you have faced?

Finding good people, that is the hardest thing. It is a very difficult industry and to find the correct people is always a challenge. I choose them over time, those that are close to our philosophy and are generally good catches. The kitchen staff is the hardest part though - finding good chefs is difficult.

What excites you in your work?

Creating, tasting, not copying and always getting inspired.

How easy is it not to copy?

That is extremely easy because you impose this on yourself. I am lucky enough to travel a lot and I am inspired by new philosophies and I am very clear about what I want to do. I have a clear direction of the cuisine I want to have. I am not a cook and I am not an architect, but I do restaurants and I do food concepts. Luxury has changed and it is all about being able to understand what the new luxury is and my brand reflects that new luxury. It is very close to the philosophy of Bill & Coo Hotels. The hardest part is to really understand your customers.

In your opinion, what determines a unique dining experience?

It is exactly that: it is not only about dining, it is about having an experience. This is what you see in fashion, in hospitality, it is everything that creates an experience. The music is as important as the dish, the staff's clothes, the details, the bits and pieces. People are not coming here just to eat; they come to live a complete experience. People do not want any more Michelin star-winning restaurants from gastronomy. A delicious nice burger appeals much more than having an amazing, beautifully-looking starter. I am not criticizing gastronomy, I am just saying that it is different. Having a delicious burger in a setting like Bill & Coo is the ultimate luxury you can have on holiday.

What are your future plans in catering?

Many openings. Many new beef bars: in Paris, in Dubai, in Saudi Arabia as well, London, Rome... so a lot of openings, a lot of new concepts but always meat oriented.

What are your thoughts about your new opening at Bill & Coo?

I loved it immediately. It was unique. The view, the size, again the energy.

The idea was not mine; it was Theodosios Kakoutis who thought it could work. I like it because it is totally unexpected to have a meat restaurant on the sea. But if you think about it, it actually makes sense, as all the other places always offer the same type of seafood dishes, and maybe one day you feel like eating something different. The only place I will ever have - a beef bar.

What determines good meat in your opinion?

Good meat is consistent. That is the most important.

What is your favourite food?

I have so many, but I am very simple. A great pasta dish, a great pizza (I am Italian) and a great steak.

What is your relationship with Mykonos?

I have been coming here for the last 20 years; it is a strong and enduring relationship. The first time I came here, there was only one flight per week and I had to catch a flight at four in the morning.

In your opinion, what makes Mykonos stand out?

The energy, the wind, the light. You feel liberation and freedom. For me, it is most probably the best place on earth.

Favourite places on the island?

I like Spilia Seaside, but there are so many new openings every year, such as Scorpios. But I like the quiet Mykonos.

How would you express Bill & Coo in one word?

Peaceful!

My brand is very close to the philosophy of Bill & Coo Hotels.



NIKOLAS SEMTEKIDOU