



OUZO BAY



A Taste of **Blue** and **White** By Kristina Burns

What we eat is who we are! Coming from a very Greek family, my culture influences the majority of my life and it's pretty much all I ever talk about. There is a big emphasis on family and food in Greek culture. I travel to Greece at least once a year and my diet at home consists mostly of authentic, home-cooked Greek meals. In other words, I'm spoiled when it comes to food. However, coming to Loyola completely took me out of my element. I quickly realized that college meant *no family* and *no Greek food*. I was devastated. How was I going to survive without them? It felt like these two key parts of my culture disappeared from my daily life in an instant. I loved being at Loyola and adored my new friends and surroundings, but I constantly found myself longing for a bite of spanakopita, moussaka, or even something as simple as chicken souvlaki. My mouth would water just thinking about all of the flavors and tastes. My culture was slowly slipping out of my grasp and all I could do was hold on to the memory of it.

Thinking about my family and all of the foods that represent my culture left me feeling homesick to say the least. For many of us, college is our first time being away from our families for an extended period of time. According to Gina Almerico from the University of Tampa, without our families and our ethnic cuisine, it is easy to feel disconnected from our culture. She explains that people tend to associate foods from their

culture and childhood with good, comforting feelings and memories. In "Food and identity: Food studies, cultural, and personal identity," she says, "food ties us to our families and holds a special worth to a person. Foods from our culture, from our family often become the comfort foods we seek as adults in times of frustration and stress," (Almerico 5). This explained why the mere thought of Greek food had me missing home more than ever; I was seeking comfort. I needed to find a home away from home right here in Baltimore.

It wasn't until my mom first visited me at Loyola that the homesickness faded. My mom told me on the phone, "I made reservations at a restaurant called Ouzo Bay in Fell's Point for tonight." Suddenly, I felt back in my element at Ouzo Bay. As I walked through the doors, I was leaving the city of Baltimore and arriving in Greece without even booking a flight. Octopus, lobster, prawns, sole, branzino, red snapper, sea bass, yellow tail, and more! The fish are all imported daily from Greece and other countries around the world. The meats are fresh and grass fed, the work of pastry chef Akis Anagnostou, and the restaurant's recipes are from the Greek islands. Like it says on their website, Ouzo Bay will have you, "writing postcards back home to your loved ones," (Ouzo Bay). Basically, for a Greek girl (and almost everyone else), it's heaven on earth.



The experience does not start with the food. It starts the moment you walk in and look around. The South Beach-like decor, the outdoor patio, the attentive servers, and the wild-caught fish on display all caught my eye immediately. The ambiance along with the food rightfully earns all the raves according to Baltimore citizen Wesley Case. Dimmed lighting, Greek music playing softly, blue lights accenting the space, and conversations fill the restaurant. Since it opened in 2012, Ouzo Bay has become one of the most popular restaurants in Baltimore and has become a favorite amongst Baltimore foodies (Case). Because of its continuously increasing popularity, there is almost always a wait. Don't wait! Be sure to make a reservation!

For your main course, there is a plethora of meats and fish to choose from along with a variety of other traditional Greek dishes. The fish are all carefully deboned and the meat is as tender as can be. But really, the lamb chops are to die for. Stuffed to the point where you have to unbutton your pants? But wait, there's more. Suzanne Loudermilk, a food critic from *Baltimore Magazine* says, "be prepared to be awed by the desserts." The critic raves about the desserts created by the restaurant's pastry chef from Greece. Pastry chef Akis Anagnostou makes an assortment of beautifully prepared delicacies like baklava served with house-made vanilla ice cream and galaktoboureko, a vanilla custard with phyllo, honey syrup, and orange reduction (Loudermilk) .

As I ate, my heart filled with the familiar feeling of home. This beautiful restaurant on the water brought me home without leaving the Inner Harbor. With over 130 restaurants to choose from in Fell's Point alone (fellspoint.us), Ouzo Bay has certainly made a name for itself. Greek or not, get ready to say, "Opa!" and get an authentic taste of blue and white. At Ouzo Bay, everyone is

Greek for a night. But, if for some baffling reason Greek food does not quench your thirst, you, too, can find a place that brings a little bit of home to you.

Even those of us who are dying to get away from home will miss it at some point. No matter where you are from, you will find your home away from home here in Baltimore. On or off campus, there is a place for everyone. Get out and explore! Find the place that makes your homesickness melt away. And remember: Home is where the food is!

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