

Built On The Nostalgia Of A Family

An Interview with Eric Mourkakos, Managing Partner, Cali Mykonos

EDITORS' NOTE *Cali Mykonos is family-owned and operated, with Managing Partner, Eric Mourkakos, at the helm. Mourkakos manages year-round operations and day-to-day management on-site during the season. For the last eight years, Mourkakos and his family have been dedicated to creating something new for travelers to Mykonos, all of which stemmed from an idea on a family vacation years ago. Cali Mykonos represents an extension of his home and family, inspired by the many summers spent in Greece growing up. Mourkakos is New York-born and a graduate of Columbia University.*



Eric Mourkakos

of waterfront mountain land tucked away from town, which was reminiscent of Mani's untouched landscape. This special plot of land transported us back to summers growing up where the mountains were behind us – with fields of oregano, olive trees, and vegetables – and in front was the sea – abundant with octopus, sea urchin, and fish. Together, we began talking and dreaming about how it was a beautiful location where we could build a few villas on and host throughout the summer – a gathering place for all of

our friends and family to connect. Later, when we received approvals for a hotel, our initial intention was simply magnified and together we agreed that we would host friends and strangers alike, who would inevitably become family.

How valuable is it for Cali Mykonos to have such a strong suite and villa product?

We want our guests to feel as if they are home in Mykonos, and the variety in our villa and suite product allows for a unique and tailored experience with each visit. From couples seeking privacy in our Cali Suite, to groups of friends and families wishing to stay in one place like the four-bedroom Villa Calliope, we offer a wide variety in sizes and configurations that comfortably accommodate our guests and their specific needs. In total, we have 40 luxury suites and villas, each with unobstructed sunrise and sea views, heated seawater pools, and a spacious terrace for experiences such as private yoga or a private chef dinner. The expansive suites and villas effectively become their very own home with the flavors, culture, and lifestyle of Greece.

How has Cali Mykonos approached its restaurant/food and beverage offerings?

My summers in Mani consisted of exploring the mountains and sea with cousins and uncles,

PROPERTY BRIEF *Cali Mykonos (calimykonos.com) is one of the island of Mykonos' newest exclusive resorts, located on the south east coast of the island. Forty pavilion-style luxury suites and villas cascade down a mountain leading to a 130-meter seawater infinity pool and an exclusive sand beach. Cali Mykonos' location in Kalafati – the picturesque and emerging region of the island – inspired the vision for this family-owned property: a place where discreet luxury, privacy, and comfort blend with the natural surroundings. The property's culinary offerings are no exception, with the signature Mediterranean restaurant offering traditional Greek cuisine using locally sourced seafood and ingredients; The Lounge, which serves sushi with the bounty of the day; traditional cooking classes on property; and event spaces with unmatched panoramic views of the Aegean. A new spa, padel courts, and fitness programs underscore the team's commitment to creating a holistic haven for those looking to escape from the buzz of the island. A few steps from the pool are a fleet of luxury boats, waiting to whisk guests to famous beach clubs and restaurants, and neighboring islands alike.*

Will you highlight the history of Cali Mykonos?

The history of Cali Mykonos is rooted in nostalgia and the traditions that my family has created in Greece over the years. Growing up, we spent our summers in Mani, a region of southern Greece where my father is from. However, about eight years ago while on a vacation in Mykonos, we fell in love with a plot



Cali Mykonos (above and opposite page)



where I learned how to harvest from the surroundings. From picking and drying oregano from the fields, to cooking fresh catch like octopus, these memories and traditions have become the root of our food and beverage offerings at Cali. Guests will find herb-planted roofs on their villas, which give off scents of oregano and thyme and rosemary as the wind blows, just as I remember as a kid in Greece, but also complements our dishes and cocktails. Since opening, we have been committed to enhancing our food and beverage offering each year to meet the varying needs of our guests. Mykonos has amazing restaurants of varying cuisines, so it was important for us to ensure that The Restaurant at Cali provided our guests the very best, traditional Greek food on their trip, leaning on local catch, produce, and ingredients grown in our gardens and caught from the sea before us while still accommodating various dietary needs, including vegan, gluten free, allergies, and more. We are also opening a new lounge that will provide sushi, featuring fresh catch from local fishermen, a dedicated cocktail menu, and live music. Finally, we look forward to introducing new cooking classes and a kosher kitchen this season.

Will you discuss Cali Mykonos' focus on health and wellness?

Although Mykonos is known for its vibrant energy, beach clubs, and nightlife, we know that travelers are seeking a more well-rounded experience that incorporates their health and wellness practices into their time on the island. Since opening, we have offered premier yoga and pilates instruction, a state of the art fitness facility and in-villa spa treatments, but we're excited to complement and enhance those wellness offerings with the first phase of our new spa in the 2024 season. This will feature a cold

plunge and infrared sauna contrast suite, as well as two treatment rooms with a menu of restorative treatments. Additionally, with the rise in popularity of padel, we can't wait to debut our new padel courts, which have an incredible backdrop of the Aegean Sea as guests play.

With Cali Mykonos' location on the Eastern edge of the island, we already provide a tranquility that is unmatched. We are able to be a perfect fit for all guests wherever they are in their wellness journey – whether looking to



focus on health and relaxation while in Greece, or simply to weave in a few experiences within their overall itinerary. Our waterfront location gives guests even more to explore, like water-sports, snorkeling, and uninterrupted morning swims in the sea.

What do you feel are the keys to a true luxury hotel experience today?

For me, it all comes down to the service and the authenticity of what the guest experiences. I want Cali to stick with our guests long after they return home – to feel that nostalgia and wish to return and experience what was special to them while here. People may come to Cali Mykonos with one intention but, knowingly or unknowingly, will experience something entirely different, because beneath the surface is a team that's driven by the hospitality for which Greece has been renowned for centuries.

How Important is it for Cali Mykonos to maintain a family culture?

Cali Mykonos was built on the nostalgia of a family who truly loves Greece and her culture, and is motivated by sharing our country and our home with others. In the end, the resort that we've built and the team that we've assembled represents an extension of my home and my family, always willing to welcome people with open arms. I want our guests to be nostalgic for their time at Cali Mykonos, just as my family was when we saw this land and it brought us back to our summers. We want to continue creating and re-creating memories and traditions with our guests.

What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in the hospitality industry?

Be open to anything. The places the work takes you, the people you meet along the way – it's the greatest way to learn and improve. ●