

A GIFT TO THE CARIBBEAN



by Spyros Peter Goudas

Dear friends, users and supporters of my products:

My name is Spyros Peter Goudas and I am from Athens, Greece.

The name Goudas may be familiar to you, under the Mr. Goudas brand of products.

Many of you may have purchased or eaten my rice, ackees, Callaloo, pepper sauces, jerk seasoning, condensed milk, flour, snappy pop, etc. or other varieties of the twelve hundred products under my brand name umbrella.

Some of you may be disappointed to realize that I am not from the Caribbean, namely Jamaica. I am from a town called Kalamaki, 12 kilometres from the capital city of Athens, with a background in Aircraft Engineering.

I left the beautiful weather of Athens at age 25 because of a military coup in Greece. When I arrived via steamship in Canada in May 1967, there was still snow on the ground. That is when I felt for the first time what frozen balls were all about. I was in a state of shock.



I worked at different firms for a couple of years, like any other immigrant in this country, including Douglas Aircraft Company.

I saved enough to purchase a small grocery store catering to Greeks, in Kensington



Market, known back then as Jewtown, at Spadina and College Streets.

At the time, I thought that having a Greek store was appropriate because I am Greek. However, the customers entering my store were Jewish, Portuguese, Indians, Blacks, etc. I looked through my binoculars and telescope to find Greek people but there was none.

Therefore, I stood there thinking what the hell am I going to do with my Feta Cheese and Greek Olives since my customers were not familiar with these products.



With the fear of losing my little investment that I fought for, I had no option but to learn the English language or any other language that I could to communicate with my customers and their food needs.

Back then, there was no school to attend to learn about the different nationalities.

Every one was a new immigrant so I had to practice life. A perfect example of my first contact with other nationalities was a customer from Jamaica who spoke only Jamaican patois trying to purchase some cow cud.

It was difficult for me to understand what he was trying to tell me. Finally, he took me aside and pulled his zipper down (pulled his ding a ling out) and tried to tell it is the same thing only from the cow (moo, moo) and demonstrated to me that it was big, big, big and attempted to dance apparently like Spanish bull fighters.

Then he tried to explain the cow's foot.

I had no option. I took his request seriously. I was not able to sleep until I found these two items from a slaughterhouse for him.

Between that time, and until I presented the cow's feet to him one week later, I ended up with huge problems.

I documented this episode almost forty years later in one of my books called the Cow Foot Story. Chaa mon, dem ah like mi foot mon!

The book is full of comedy, describing me taking the cow foot to the barber for shaving and try to buy the new discovery in hair removal for the ladies called Neet. When I asked the pharmacist where he



stocked the Neet, the pharmacist asked "Who is it for?" I did not want to say it was for the cow's foot, so I said it was for myself.

The pharmacist obviously thought that maybe I was some kind of a sissy because i was good looking.

My complete satisfaction was the smile on my customers face when I presented the cow foot and cow cud to him. In fact, he was so happy; he told me how to say good morning and good night in the Jamaican language.

For instance, good morning is Rascloth. And good night is Bombacloth.

I was so happy to learn these two new words that I used to greet all my customers with them.

I suggest you do not use the above mentioned Jamaican words without consulting a Jamaican friend! They may or may not mean Good Morning and Good Night.

This was the beginning of a new relationship with the different cultures.

Similar to the Jamaicans, Trinidadians were another story. They did not know too much about ackees, in fact they knew nothing about them.

They liked items like green pigeon peas, karella, dasheen bush, bodi, ripe plantains, christophene (cho cho for Jamaicans), and



ladies fingers. In fact, I was the first importer of green bananas into Canada.

Then, there were the Barbadians inquiring about Flying Fish, pepper pot and other national favourites.

Take the above examples and multiply them for the other islands, such as Grenada, St. Lucia, Antigua, Martinique, Montserrat, etc.

In a short period of time, working 24 hours a day to satisfy the needs of my customers, I travelled mentally to every corner of the Caribbean.

Although, I have never been to the Caribbean, up to now, I can tell you all the factories, producers, farmers and anyone associated with food products, ingredients, materials, etc.

In parallel with my adventure in the food business, I also opened the first Caribbean Club in Canada, called The 813 Club.

You may ask your mother or grandmother, they may have danced with me since I was the deejay (DJ).

At the end of my journey, I realized one thing compared to other people: To any non-black person, a black person is just black. They all eat the same thing, have the same eating habits, and they all behave the same way.

However, now that I have come to know the real differences, the personalities, the eating habits, like Christopher Columbus, I knew that I had entered The New World.

The fever of learning began to flow through my veins and I wanted to learn more.

I learned that food is one thing, culture is another.

Every nationality has its own cultural thing (idiosyncrasies).

In addition, the Trinidadians have given a most wonderful gift to Canada on the occasion of its 100th Birthday.

With the little money that I had, I became involved with the people who started Caribana. Name such as Winston Ali, Russell Charter, Ken Shah, Jasse MacDonald, other personalities, and we produced the best Caribana ever down University Avenue.

Although, I was not recorded on film, I was the backbone and the brain of the whole event.

You may view my creations on www.mrgoudasbooks.com in the Video (English) Version titled Caribana.

This film is part of the Archives, is two hours long, and is considered the best Caribana film ever made and was featured on in-flight service to and from the Caribbean.

I documented in one of my books with the title **One Caribana story**



And since we are on the topic, on March 29th, 2002, I was presented from the Trinidad and Tobago Government an award “In appreciation of outstanding contribution and dedication



to the development of the Arts, Culture and Education of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Canada.”

(The occasion was a double celebration: it also happened to be my 60th birthday!)

My quest for learning did not just settle on the Caribbean, I create products for Chinese, Malaysians, Indonesians, Philipinos, Thilandeas, Burmese (Myanmar), Sri Lankan (Ceylon), Cambodians, Vietnamese etc, as part of my South East Asia concern.

Then I studied and created products for the Asians, which involve, East Indians, Pakistanis, people from Bangladesh. I also have included products for Middle Eastern countries, such as, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Israel and others as well as many African countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Egypt, etc, etc.

My creation of Latin American foods is documented in one of my books titled, **Latino Masa Creations.**



It is a wonderful comedy in which I reveal how the Mexicans beat the mierda out of me.

By the way, do you know what Mierda means? They beat the shit out of me! It is a real comedy.

The back cover shows me lying on the ground with my harmonica in my hand, and a Mexican kicking my butt.

This book is not intended to be a criticism of the Mexican culture. Please see it for its humour.

I am actually a big fan of Mexico, its people, culture and music.

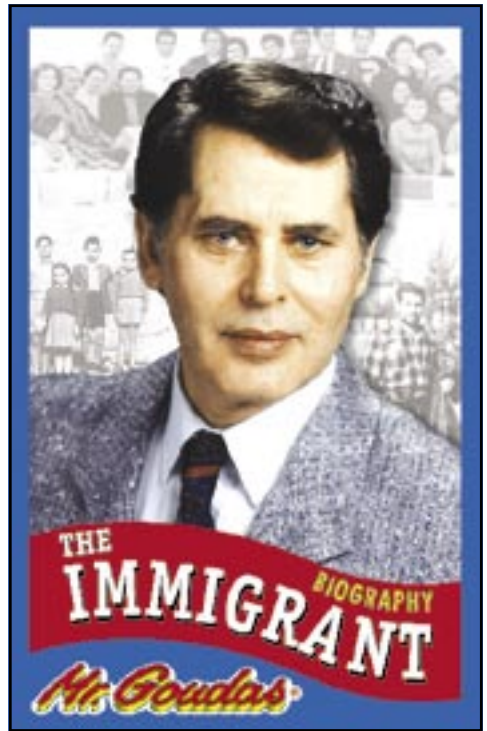


I love also to play Mexican songs on my harmonica.

I have eaten food from every nationality due to the nature of my business.

I believe that no one in the world has ever spent the time or the effort in understanding the food requirements of the immigrants in this part of the world as I have.

In fact, I have documented my story in by biography, titled, **The Immigrant**.



The general public may not be aware that I am a certified work-a-holic to an extreme degree.

Over the years, I have received requests for donations from every nationality and the word no is not in the Goudas dictionary when it comes to the sincere food needs of an organization, or country, as documented in the Letters of Appreciation in my website. (Gilbert Jamaica, Haiti, Grenada, Tsunami in Sri Lanka, pict below, etc,etc).



You may end up spending hours and hours reading. In fact, I was invited to attend the ceremony for the relief effort for the Pakistan flood just recently, which I supported heavily. The head of the organization told me, Mr. Goudas, since you are a Christian, you think that St. Peter would be at the Gates of Paradise, but if you end up in the wrong door and you see a guy with a turban on his head, do not worry, just tell him your name and he will let you in right away.

I would like to point out to you that when I arrived in Canada, with no money, no friends and no language, I was sleeping in the luxurious hotel of a thousand stars; in a few words, on the streets of Toronto, looking up at the stars and dreaming for some food!

Like anything else in this life, because of my vast experience, Mr. Maxwell Blackwood, the editor of the Jamaica Xpress newspaper, told me to write an article for his newspaper, and since I have tried every dish of the Caribbean, like dumpling, ackees and codfish, Pelau, pepper pot, jerk chicken, cow foot soup, cow cud soup, goat head soup, ox tail, snappers, yams, pumpkin soup, fried okra, flying fish, etc., etc., etc., I decided to write this book and gave it the title "A Gift to the Caribbean".

In my humble opinion I believe the gift which I am about to reveal to you, (since I know the Caribbean taste plus the fact that I am married to a Barbadian for 40 plus years) is a sweet treat which will be a favourite in years to come, even when I have passed from this world.

I have already written a book about this recipe. However, you may not be familiar with the title and may have disregarded it as foreign at the displays of my books in the

BOUGATSA & BAKLAVA



supermarket, flea market, organizations and events or even on my website.

Now that I have aroused your curiosity, I will insert a short story about the recipe and then will detail how to create it.

The name of the recipe is Bougatsa.

It is easy to find ingredients and to create. However, before you attempt to create it, you may visit the following locations on the Danforth in Toronto, Ontario:

Acropolis, Donald's Bakery or Athens Bakery and sample this delicious delight.

This recipe in my opinion is very easy for those who love to bake. However, knowing the tastes of the people from the Caribbean, I am certain that final outcome will be exceptional in taste and quality.

This recipe has been selected as my gift to the Caribbean.

Bougatsa Story.

Bougatsa is a Greek word and the recipe for creating it has been around for centuries.



However, because there are so many variations in the creation of this wonderful dessert, that it seems like each location has its own bougatsa recipe.

There are endless pastry shops in Greece; in fact, they are more frequent than banks.

Consumers have the opportunity to purchase baklava, halva, spinach pies, cheese pies, bougatsa, etc., etc., everywhere.

It is advisable that when in Greece to avoid



even looking at the pastry shops. Moreover, do not dare enter them if you are on a diet, the results could be a disaster; you can gain 10 lbs. in 10 days.

Nevertheless, what is bougatsa? What makes it different from the other pastries?

I will provide you with the recipe, but first you must read this story,

Let us start from the beginning.

When I was a very young kid, having begun working at age 9 or 10, I always had the desire and the appetite, especially when I had spare change, to go to these peddlers (street vendors) in downtown Athens, to purchase one of these pastries.

However, bougasta was one of my favourites. Therefore, over the years, I tried every kind of bougatsa of all different tastes.

I believe I have tried over 1450 different bougatsas! Of course, with numbers such as this, I am a connoisseur of bougasta. An expert in its taste. I continue with the story.

Finally, I left Athens and established myself in Canada and since there were not too many Greek pastry shops around, I had almost forgotten the word, bougatsa, until one day 15 years later, I decided to go to Greece for a visit for a few days.

One day I was standing in front of the palace, admiring the precision timing in the changing of the guards. At that time, I was accompanied by Panos, my son (middle) and my nephew Andonis. At one point, someone tapped me gently on my shoulders from behind. Upon turning around, I recognized that the man in question was, Mike Sinanis, an old friend from Kalamaki, my hometown. Catching up on old times, I was advised



by my friend that he had immigrated to Johannesburg, South Africa.

He further advised that he had married a woman from Cyprus and she was gifted with the ability to create bougatsa.

Light bulbs began to flash in my head.

At the same time, he informed me that he and his wife were planning to leave South Africa and immigrate to Canada.

Upon their arrival in Canada, once stabilized, his wife Despina became established as an active member of the Society of Cyprus.

The society holds a function once a year, and requires a donation of food products from Goudas Foods to create their dishes.

She always came to the Goudas Foods offices to receive the products. Of course, she never came empty handed. She always came with a tray of bougatsa. In addition, since I was always very busy all day long, at the end of the day I opened the refrigerator to have a piece of that bougatsa.

Upon opening the refrigerator, the tray was always there covered with foil, but there was not a single piece left. No matter how many times I enquired who ate the bougatsa, each person stated all he/she had was one piece. It seemed like nobody knew what happened to the bougatsa.

I told my secretary that the next time a tray of bougatsa arrived that she was to post a sign stating that this product contained ingredients hazardous to your health, or may contain poison.

Nevertheless, despite the warnings the tray was always empty.

This time, I made it a point to know the exact time Despina was arriving to ensure that I escorted her and the tray into the office.

In this way, it would ensure that I could set a few pieces aside to take home.

At 3:00 a.m., I awoke with bougatsa on my mind, and similar to a man walking in his sleep with hands outstretched, I arrived at the refrigerator door confident that bougatsa was inside.

I took a piece and on the way back to the bedroom, I overheard the echo of my doctor's voice whispering in my head not to eat bougatsa at 3:00 a.m. Nevertheless, I ignored this advice and comfortably sat down and upon having my first bite, I heard bells ringing, a choir of angels singing, and with my eyes closed; I saw a clear view of paradise.

Only to be disturbed by Koukla (my dog) scratching my feet demanding a piece too. The conclusion of the story is that between me and Koukla, we made quite a few visits to the refrigerator that night.

In addition, I was disappointed that on the

final trip to the refrigerator there was none left. Tears came to my eyes.

Maybe by now, while reading this you have discovered that you have a craving for bougatsa. You may go to any Greek pastry shop and purchase one, or follow the recipe of which is outlined below.

Of course, this is another Mr. Goudas story because bougatsa contains Mr. Goudas Semolina for pastries, Mr. Goudas Sugar, Mr. Goudas Vanilla, Mr. Goudas Cinnamon, Bougatsa

1 pkg phyllo 3/4 cup unsalted butter, 1/4 cup powdered or icing sugar, Cinnamon

Filling:

6 cups of milk 2%

1 cup semolina for pastry

1 cup of sugar,

4 eggs

2 envelopes of vanilla powder

or 2 tbsp vanilla

liquid, 1 tbsp lemon juice, 1/4 cup unsalted butter, 2 slices of lemon rind (skin)

Method:

Place milk in large pot on medium heat. Add semolina, butter and stir with wooden spoon until of a custard consistency. Beat eggs, sugar, vanilla, lemon juice and blend well. Pour mixture into the semolina and milk batter. Stir continuously, bring to a boil.

Once cream is ready, remove from heat.

Allow to cool. Lightly grease the bottom of a large cooking tray.

Spread phyllo sheets and cut to fit the tray.

You have two options:

1. Make small individual pieces by filling the phyllo with the filling, fold it and position each piece within the tray. Spread melted butter over phyllo in each piece and in between them at the sides.

2. Place enough phyllo to cover bottom and over lapping the sides of the tray. Pour the cream filling over the phyllo. Cover with 3 or 4 layers of phyllo. Spread melted butter over phyllo.

Place your creation in the oven at 350 for 30 minutes, until the top is golden brown.

When finally done, remove from oven and evenly spread icing sugar over the top.

Sprinkle with cinnamon and enjoy! Bougatsa may be eaten hot, or out of the refrigerator.



Spyros Peter Goudas



In the picture above, I am shown presenting the Mr. Goudas award to one of the best students in the country.

Panos is shown in the back row.

Publication Information

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