

*Selling an
American dream:*
**Australia's
Greek Café**

Hurstville City Museum & Gallery is presenting a travelling exhibition from **2 August - 28 September 2014**, titled 'Selling an American Dream: Australia's Greek Café' - this photographic exhibition of Australia's Greek cafés, explores the key role that Greek Australians played during the formative years of Australian culture.

Every time you drink a Coke, enjoy an ice cream or sweet chocolate treat, go to the cinema, or listen to the latest popular music hit, you can thank Australia's Greek settlers.

Greek cafés in Australia were a Trojan horse for the Americanisation of this nation's eating and socio-cultural habits from the very start of the twentieth century. They initially introduced American commercial food catering ideas, technology and products and later influenced the development of cinema and popular music.

The Greek café helped transform Australian popular culture. This exhibition not only looked at how this was done, but also the personal stories of those involved.

Mayor of Hurstville, *Cr Jack Jacovou* said the photographic exhibition will focus on the history of Greek cafés in Australia.

"Greek cafés were a central place to meet, eat and be socially entertained," he said.

"Locally, the place to be was Parry's Milkbar which were located in Rockdale, Kogarah and Caringbah."

Hurstville City Museum & Gallery is inviting the community to get involved and share their memories, photographs, and memorabilia of anyone who may have visited Parry's Milkbar at one of its locations.

Did you have a favourite milkshake at Parry's? Did you meet your friends there? Or did you work at Parry's? Hurstville City Museum & Gallery would like to hear from you.

Mayor Jacovou said the exhibition, to be titled 'Selling an American Dream: Australia's Greek Café' will help to unravel the local history about Greek cafes and milk bars from the St George area.

New exhibition to uncover local history of Parry's Milkbar

"The Hurstville City Museum & Gallery is collecting stories from community members until Monday, 30 June 2014," he said.

If you would like to share your story about Parry's Milkbar, contact Hurstville City Museum & Gallery on 9330 6444 or email museumgallery@hurstville.nsw.gov.au

California Café, Nyngan, NSW, mid to late 1930s



Photo: Frank Hurley. Courtesy: J Varvaessos.

The Greek café did not introduce Greek dishes. Catering to the established tastes of their overwhelmingly British-Australian clientele was essential in a racially and culturally limited 'White Australia'. But steak and eggs or a mixed grill could be purchased with an 'American Beauty' fancy sundae for dessert, and a spider soda drink or flavoured milkshake to wash it all down. The union proved commercially successful, and to a degree, the Greek café was a Trojan horse for the Americanisation of Australian eating habits well before the 1950s.

Apparently outfitted during the 1930s by Greek shopfitter, Stephen C Varvaessos, the California Café's very early Art Deco stylistic elegance was commissioned by its owner, Jack Vanges (Vangis) [on right behind counter], who had settled in the New South Wales western rural township of Nyngan in the late 1920s. Later, Vanges became the town's mayor. The California was one of three Greek-run cafés in Nyngan. All espoused American names. The others were the Niagara and the Golden Gate. America had well and truly arrived in country Australia.

Some of Australia's Greek Cafés in the Exhibition



Cominos Refreshment Rooms, Warwick QLD in the 1920s. Photo: courtesy of T. Samios



Astoria Café interior, Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW, late 1940s



Milk Bar interior, Martin Place, Sydney NSW in 1934 Photo- courtesy L Keldoulis



The Legend Café, Bourke Street, Melbourne, Vic 1956. Photo: courtesy of I. A. Nicolades



Capitol Picture Theatre Milk Bar in Wagga Wagga NSW mid-1930s. Photo courtesy of X Stathis



Niagara Café — 'Australia's wonder café', Gundagai, NSW, 1938