

THE TALE OF TWO KITCHENS

Paterson's Kontos Foods enlists
Ridgewood-based Ulrich to cook up
something for their kitchen

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Creating a stunning corporate kitchen was a bit of a no-brainer for the Kontos family of Kontos Foods. The Paterson-based company decided to design an inviting place where they could gather with potential clients to showed off their pita breads and other Mediterranean-style foods.

"It's a spot to have a taste and talk," says Nancy Kontos, CFO of Kontos. "We're foodies, so we gravitate toward the kitchen."

Though the Kontos family now courts massive food distributors in their corporate kitchen, they started with rather humble beginnings. Nancy tells of her father-in-law, Evris Kontos, bringing over his mastery of filo-making from Cyprus to Paterson. He developed a machine that was able to roll out thin layers of filo dough (which creates the flaky pastry used in desserts like baklava) to sell it in local markets.

In the early 1980s, Evris sold his filo business, then called Apollo Fillo, to Pillsbury. But his son, Nancy's husband, Steve, was still looking for a way to expand on what his father had built. In 1987, Steve began producing and selling pita bread instead of filo, something Nancy says was rare at the time.

"It started out very slowly, making some bread and trying to get customers. It slowly kept expanding to where we are today," she says.

Where they are today is mass-producing not only pita bread, but other Mediterranean foods like olives, cheeses, olive oils and gyro meat. In 1994, Kontos Foods even started selling fillo again. The company sells to >



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CFO OF KONTOS

distributors nationally and internationally, who then sell the Kontos products to chain restaurants. So, the Kontos family built a kitchen about four years ago to make demonstrations with clients a more pleasant experience.

“Sometimes the big chains come out with an idea for a product and they want to see how our products can help them achieve what they want,” Nancy says. “They want to see how our products work. We felt that it was a pretty important thing to have a nice test kitchen to represent our products.”

Nancy and her family turned to Aparna Vijayan, a designer with Ridgewood’s Ulrich, a custom home remodeling, kitchens and bath design business, to fulfill their vision. Vijayan had previously designed the kitchen for their home in Ridgewood (shown on this page), and Nancy was impressed by her talent and vision. The two collaborated to create a functional kitchen that could show off the company’s products when distributors stopped by (shown on previous pages).

“My home kitchen is a little more traditional, a little more residential, with earthy tones,” Nancy says. “The commercial kitchen is more modern with stainless steel and royal blue, which are our company’s colors.”

The Kontos family also uses the commercial kitchen to receive any awards they win and to hold fundraisers.

“The people we invite there can feel that home touch,” chimes in Demi Kontos, Nancy and Steve’s daughter and vice president of Data Strategy and Operations for Kontos food. “We’re not showing our products in a busy kitchen in the back of a restaurant. It’s inviting but relatable.” ■