

The Bars of  
**O**  
Street

# Disco, dance and drink

*Yiayia's, Club  
1427 jive to a  
different beat*

By Josh Krauter

Staff writer

*Editor's note: This is the third in a series of 12 stories exploring the history of the O street bars. The strip - which begins at 14th and O and runs down to Ninth and O - has served as a major gathering place for University of Nebraska-Lincoln students for the past 70 years.*

The majority of the O street bars work on one overhauling premise: booze. Selling booze, buying booze, students' drinking of booze.

But at least one bar on O street dances to a different beat.

The owners of Yiayia's Pizza Beer & Wine, and its companion, Club 1427, work individually to bring a bit of culture, a bit of the European dance scene and, above all, a bit of atmosphere to the south side of O street.

In 1993, Kimbe and Demetrios Meares turned a long-vacant building into an uncommon restaurant and bar.

More than six years later, they own a second bar next door to their first one.

The Meares' opened Yiayia's Pizza Beer & Wine, 1423 O St., in October 1993. Previously, the building had been a League of Human Dignity, but sat empty for more than four years before Yiayia's opened.

Neither of the Meares had owned a bar before, but they had experience working in bars and restaurants and decided to take the plunge into ownership.

"We had always wanted to have a restaurant and bar," Kimbe Meares said.

A year and a half later, the couple bought the property next door to Yiayia's and turned it into Club 1427, 1427 O St. At first, Meares said, the bar was an "old-style hall."

"We wanted to do something different," she said. "There weren't a lot of bars around without beer signs, and there wasn't a place to play pool."

Four classic nine-foot pool tables were put in to contribute to the older atmosphere, but gradually, the Meares became interested in changing the club's atmosphere from old to new.

"We slowly started to get into (dance) music, and we started to have dancing on Thursdays in 1996," she said.

A pool table was removed to make room for dancing, and the others were taken out later.

"We took the pool tables out because we slowly got more into the music, more into a nightclub atmosphere," she said.

As 1427's atmosphere changed, so did the Meares' interest in Yiayia's. The couple sold the bar in January of this year to Nader, owner of

the downtown restaurant The Grotto. Nader said his experience at The Grotto has made the Yiayia's transition smooth, but the hours are longer.

He said he was interested in Yiayia's because of its unique atmosphere.

"The pizza is different from other pizzas in town, and it's a nice atmosphere," he said. "We don't serve hard liquor. It's more of a meeting place."

Meares said the decision to sell Yiayia's had a lot to do with 1427.

"We sold it because we're just into different things," Meares said. "We're into the dance club now."

The club features eight DJs and has expanded the dancing to Friday and Saturday night, too. Meares describes the club as a "European-style dance club."

Meares said the change in the club's atmosphere has brought in a diverse crowd, including a large international clientele.

"It's super diverse here," she said. "There are lots of different people, which is good."

She said 1427 is distinct from the local bar scene.

"They get a lot of ball-cap, Abercrombie and Fitch people, but being a dance club, we get a different crowd."

However, she adds, "All the bars on the strip

*"There are lots of different people, which is a good thing."*

**Kimbe Meares**

co-owner of Club 1427, on the clientele

make a good contribution, and that's a good thing."

1427 also features local art, with shows every other Wednesday, as well as an open mike night, also every other Wednesday.

Meares said there are no plans to change 1427 in the future.

"We'll just keep plugging away and keep trying to get different DJs," she said.

Nader said Yiayia's won't change much under his ownership, either. He plans to add more seats and has added another pool table, but he said the atmosphere will stay the same, with an emphasis on food, beer and wine without the hard liquor.

"It's a better beer-drinking place than a beer-guzzling place," he said. "We're not looking to get the customer hammered. They can do that somewhere else."



Delan Lonowski/DN