

Maria Kaitatzis, You're AMAZING!

We are delighted to introduce Maria Kaitatzis from Fronditha Care Lower Templestowe, recipient of The OSCARS Recognition of Excellence program.

OSCAR Care Group recognises Maria's excellence & passion in creating nutritious, delicious & beautiful culturally-sensitive meals for her mostly Greek residents at Fronditha Care Templestowe.

Maria grew up in Greece's second biggest city, Thessaloniki. Her passion for Mediterranean cuisine was sparked from an early age, helping her mother and grandmother in the kitchen and seeing their love when talking about ingredients & cooking.

After finishing high school, she completed a cooking course & worked in a hotel in Chalkidiki. "During this period I realised that this is the vocation I enjoy and want to be involved with for life!" says Maria.

Maria & her husband Ioannis brought their children Andreas and Dimitra to Australia 6 years ago. Maria worked as Assistant Chef at Fronditha Care Clayton & was then promoted to Head Chef at Fronditha Care Templestowe. For four years, Maria has relished the chance to cook for her much-loved residents & often personalises their meals to their liking.

Maria says, "I love creating special meals and give pleasure through my food to our residents. It's like cooking for my family."

Following: Maria's thoughts on Teamwork, Food Safety, Dietary Requirements & she shares her favourite Recipe!

Maria Kaitatzis

Organisation:



Facility: Lower Templestowe

Position: Head Chef, Fronditha Care

Excellence: Passionate, skilled & friendly Chef, who with her trusted team create nutritious & culturally-sensitive meals for residents who are like her second family.





“As a Team we are all Working as One!”

When discussing her Team at Fronditha Care Lower Templestowe, Maria beams with delight. “As a team we are all working as one. My colleagues have my trust and respect, in turn I guide them to towards quality meals and presentation.” Testament to this is the Team continuity; all of the Kitchen Staff have worked with Maria for 4 years.

“Together we cooperate and as a result we work very effectively and in a very friendly environment.”

Maria is proud that, for the last three years, this home has received **5 Star Food Safety Awards** from the local council, and she acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought safety & personal hygiene even more to the forefront of her role.

Positive feedback from her Team & Residents is of paramount importance to Maria, who states “Under my watch, I receive encouraging reports from our dietitians on meal quality and presentation.

Maria believes that everyone should strive to do their best, which is why she is currently studying Certificate IV in commercial cooking & focussing on always improving meal presentation for her Residents.

“I love cooking every day to give pleasure to our elderly Residents, seeing their happy smiling faces is my reward.”

Maria's Tips on Managing Individual Dietary Requirements

Maria shares that a part of her role as Head Chef that is complicated, but that she knows well, is managing individual dietary requirements.

Because of the very high majority of Greek Residents at Fronditha Care Lower Templestowe, Maria has introduced culturally-sensitive Summer & Winter Menus that include Traditional recipes & popular Greek cuisine, to ensure that her Residents truly feel at home.

Maria is also very aware of different resident dietary requirements, including those who have Allergies or Dysphagia. These residents receive the same cultural meals, except:

- Meals for residents with allergies are prepared separately in a designated area & modified per their Allergen needs
- Residents with dysphagia receive meals with consistency that meets requirements of IDDSI texture modified foods and thickened liquids

Maria's Signature Dish, "Gemista"



Maria learned her signature dish from her mother & grandmother. Her children Andreas and Dimitra love this nutritious meal, and so do her beloved residents at Fronditha Care Lower Templestowe. Maria shares, "I come from the Northern part of Greece, which has influenced me through "*politico cuisine*", with lots of delicious herbs and spices. This is why my signature dish is "Gemista", which is stuffed tomatoes and capsicums with minced beef or pork and rice."

Ingredients

8 red bell peppers
500g minced beef
2 onions
2 garlic cloves
1 bunch of fresh parsley
½ bunch peppermint / spearmint
2 carrots
8 tsp rice
200g tomato paste
Salt, pepper, oregano

Method

1. Sauté onions and garlic.
2. Add the minced meat and brown.
3. Add parsley, peppermint, carrots, salt, pepper and oregano to your liking and the tomato paste and boiled water, and cook on high temperature until it is simmering.
4. Add the rice and cook until it has absorbed most of the liquid.
5. Add the mixture and fill the stuffed peppers.
6. Bake at 180° for 40–45 minutes.

Tip: Best served with a side of baked potatoes.