

GOT M



MARGARET & GEOFFREY ZAKARIAN

In an age when the James Beard Foundation gives awards for TV personalities and programs, and New York's finest chefs are establishing outposts in elite resort destinations, it takes more than exquisite cooking and excellent reviews to be considered one of Gotham's greats. But now Geoffrey Zakarian is poised to enter the pantheon where the city's legendary restaurateurs like Danny Meyer, Keith McNally, and Daniel Bolud rule supreme.

Geoffrey has been a force to be reckoned with since the 1980s, and his newest restaurant—The Lambs Club, which he co-owns with his wife, marketing expert Margaret Zakarian (and other partners)—shows he can pull off the often elusive formula of critic-pleasing cuisine and celebrity cachet. The Zakarians' new ventures outside the city, and Geoffrey's recent victory on *Next Iron Chef*, further prove they have what it takes to be heavyweight contenders in today's multiplatform, hypercompetitive restaurant scene.

Geoffrey began his career at the legendary restaurants Le Cirque and 21 Club two decades ago. He earned a coveted Michelin star for former restaurant Country, and raves from *The New York Times* for his work at the Royalton's 44 and other establishments. His December 2011 victory on *Next Iron Chef*—where he triumphed over Marcus Samuelsson, Alex Guarnaschelli, and a host of other name-brand toques—brought him into the ranks of ordained celebchefs. And many would argue that in our

fame-obsessed city, celebchefs are the only chefs who matter.

This media victory builds on the buzz at The Lambs Club and the Zakarians' other new entry, The National. While Geoffrey masterminds the kitchen, Margaret focuses on marketing strategy and branding. At The Lambs Club in the Chatwal Hotel, she leverages the restaurant's theatrical past (the Sanford White-designed building once housed the storied actors society that shares its name), hosting events such as a recent celebration for the musical *Chicago*'s 15th anniversary on Broadway, attended by Bebe Neuwirth and Matthew Broderick. Added to these are the restaurant's other A-list diners (Sting, Kanye West, Woody Allen, to name a few), not to mention a steady stream of fashion and media powerhouses.

As the final piece in their culinary empire, the Zakarians are establishing colonies. Their newest is Tudor House, in Miami, where Daniel Boulud also has an outpost. And since 2007, Geoffrey has overseen the food and beverage program at the Water Club hotel at the Borgata in Atlantic City, where Wolfgang Puck and Bobby Flay also helm restaurants.

While some couples need the breathing space of separate careers, the Zakarians thrive on the intensity of their 24/7 relationship. Says Geoffrey, "We're both food lovers, which makes it an easy relationship to be in."

"Our work is our life and our life is our work," Margaret says. "We're not shutting it off."

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