



Lifting Standards of

Industry and Love

If business is a gamble, then Peter and Anna Eliopoulos must not only be addicts, they must be professionals. This married duo is using their bevy of companies and their combined talents in business to change the way people think about entertaining.

BY AMBER TOUTANT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL DIKTA

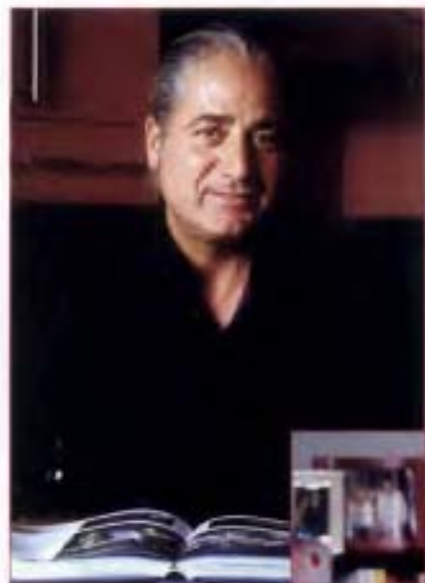
Some people are happy to follow tradition and stick to the safest plan, but if you talk to Peter or Anna Eliopoulos, you'll see that they are not these people. From the beginning, they defied the institution, opting for a challenging yet rewarding life. They started by doing what many married couples would never dare: they went into business together. Finding true love and starting a business may seem like two entirely separate challenges, but for Peter and Anna Eliopoulos, it only made sense that they should come together.

Peter Eliopoulos knew that he had to get involved in the entertainment industry. Having always been a bit of a party

animal himself, he loved the energy and vibrancy of special events and he had a craving to be a part of the action. In the beginning, it all seemed rather normal. He started his business with a simple yet elegant catering company. Soon, Anna had started creating corporate gift baskets for their events under the name of Peter & Paul's. Within just a few years that aspect of the business was booming on its own. However, it became clear that one business and not even two businesses were enough to satiate the desire of this power-couple. Over time, they worked and expanded their specialties until their starting company was an umbrella over 11 different businesses that all provided services in the hospitality and entertainment fields.

Although Peter jokes that the business end has been easy from the start, after a little probing, he admits that there have been snags along the way. "There's no doubt," said Peter. "There have been ups and downs, especially in the '90s when the economy really took a dive." Even so, Peter says that sometimes the challenges they face are the most fun part of the job. "I love what I do. I just don't consider it work. I can't wait to get up in the morning and come to work. I get up earlier and earlier every day. It inspires me... any challenge to face, it's great."

One of the challenges Peter often faces is how to change the way his clients eat at weddings. It sounds like a big task, but it's this defiance of tradition that



Peter takes on with a grin. For instance, Peter introduced the idea of serving seafood prior to the meat dish years ago: "Why serve the best dish last, when you're not as hungry anymore?" Now he's hoping to create

another trend: people giving up one of the courses in the meal and donating the equivalent of its cost to charity instead. He says that almost a full course's worth of food goes to waste at every wedding because there is just too much to eat. "It's a shame," said Peter. "We have to come up with a system and hopefully set a trend other people will follow to give back to the community."

Peter and Anna are no strangers to charity. They've raised \$700,000 for Sick Kids Hospital through Peter and Paul's golf tournaments and have held a Christmas banquet for underprivileged families at Bellagio. This year they've also been honoured to act as chairs at the 13th Annual Venetian Ball, one of the largest Italian premier fundraisers, at the Paramount on October 5th, 2006. On this year's agenda, Anna will be co-chairing the Toronto Film Festival.

With 25 years of work, things seem to be getting easier for Peter and Anna. They have secured ownership of a variety of companies available to serve all their customers' needs. byPeterandPauls.com has everything you'd need for a special

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event, including the finest venues, caterers, gifts, photographers, videographers, invitations, and accessories. It seems the only things they can't provide are the guests! Peter prides himself on being able to offer such a smorgasbord of services to his clients. He says that the variety of companies he looks after keeps his job interesting. "It's like wearing 10-15 hats on a daily basis. It's overwhelming when you look at it," Peter admits. "It's a lot [of work], but we love what we do." Anna also shares Peter's enthusiasm for their growing business. Of course, Anna and Peter know they couldn't do everything themselves, which is why they are grateful to their staff. "We've gotten where we are with all their help. And we are appreciative to them."

Despite all their successes, both Peter and Anna admit that their project isn't anywhere near complete. Peter wants to take his businesses national and is even looking into an international project that would have its roots in Europe. Anna, who is directly involved in managing Peter & Paul's Gift Baskets and Promo, also has dreams of making her business "the ultimate gift-giving

company of Canada." But, business is not all there is in the future of these two partners of the heart. They already have three daughters in their 20s; Katherine, Angela and Nicole, and are looking forward to seeing their family grow. Peter also just planted 1,200 olive trees in Greece where he owns chickens, pigs, pigeons, rabbits, and sheep. In the future he hopes to create an entirely organic farm that he can share with relatives and friends, and possibly the whole world.

Peter and Anna both agree that they have been lucky to live *la dolce vita*, which to them involves respecting yourself and the people around you, being able to travel the world, work and have fun all at the same time, and overall, "to do what you want when you want." While it hasn't always been easy, there's one secret that Peter says has made all the difference in their lives: "You just can't give up on things, you have to work hard. You have to work on it, solve the issue, solve the problem and move on to the next thing." It's a philosophy they apply to both their business and their relationship. So far, it seems to be working. ●