



# GET THEM TO THE GREEK

Following Greece's financial meltdown, a wave of young Athenian entrepreneurs are fighting rising unemployment with new ventures. Their aim: to lure back visitors and reinvigorate the local scene

It's been a bumpy few years for Athens. Grinding austerity has sparked riots, strikes and political turbulence, bringing tourism in the city to a shuddering halt. But as Greece makes tentative steps towards recovery, Athenians are championing the capital's revival with creative start-ups that focus on the affordable and authentic.

While most of the souvenirs in Pláka – Athens's old town – are imported from China, **FORGET ME NOT** stocks witty updates on Greek classics including evil-eye coasters and tote bags made from recycled feta tins. At **B38**, Mirella Manta and Ioli Michalopoulou sell accessories from local designers alongside own-label womenswear. And while many high-end boutiques have closed, **MOHNBLUMCHEN** has evolved; reborn as a pizza restaurant, it's packed with the fashionable crowd once more.

Off gritty Omonia Square, **ROMANTSO** is named after the pulp magazine once printed there. The top floors have cheap studios for creatives, while hipsters hang out

in the bar and performance spaces downstairs. Less self-consciously cool is cosy neighbourhood bar **KYRIOS HOU**, the latest hotspot in Ano Petralona, a residential area that has morphed into a late-night street party. Don't confuse it with **KYRIOS**, another newcomer, where a stuffed gorilla guards the DJ booth, and the staff in their leather aprons are as good-looking as the clientele.

Once overpriced and underwhelming, the Athens hotel scene is being freshened up by DIY hoteliers. A group of friends are behind **LIVE IN ATHENS** ([www.liveinathens.net](http://www.liveinathens.net); from about £40),

PHOTOGRAPHS: SPYROS CATRAMIS/IMAGEBRIEF; JOHN HIOS/IMAGEBRIEF; CONSTANTINOS ILIOPOULOS/IMAGEBRIEF; DIMITRIS KLEANTHIS; OLGA TZIMO

