



“The Old Coffee Shop of Lania”

In the centre of Lania, where the lanes widen just enough for sunlight to spill across the stones, there once stood the **old coffee shop** — the *kafeneio* that every villager simply called *to kafenio*. It was nothing grand: a single large room, whitewashed walls, a wooden door that creaked like an old violin, and a veranda shaded by vines in summer. But for the people of Lania, it was the **heart of the village**, the place where life gathered itself each day.

Inside, the room was simple but purposeful — just as traditional Cypriot coffee shops always were. A few handmade wooden tables, rush-woven chairs, and a tall glass-fronted cupboard where the owner kept the cups, plates, and the precious briki for boiling coffee. In the corner stood the raised fireplace, its charcoal always smouldering. The hot sand above it was kept warm throughout the day, ready to cradle the small pot in which **Cyprus coffee** was slowly coaxed to life.

Every morning, before the sun reached the rooftops, the first men arrived. Farmers with dust still on their boots. The postman with his leather satchel. The old men who came not for the coffee but for the company. The kafenio was their **sanctuary**, a place to rest from the weight of work and the worries of the world.

They sat in a loose circle, as men did in every rural coffee shop in Cyprus, sharing gossip, telling jokes, debating politics, or settling small disputes with the calm authority of people who had known each other all their lives. Sometimes a merchant would arrive to conduct business; sometimes a neighbour would come to ask advice. The kafenio was not just a café — it was the **village parliament**, the **newspaper**, the **courtroom**, and the **theatre** all at once.

In winter, everyone gathered around the central fireplace, warming their hands while the owner roasted coffee beans over charcoal — beans that filled the room with a smell so rich it felt like a blanket. In summer, the men spilled outside onto the veranda, under the shade of vines or the old mulberry tree, where the breeze carried the scent of grapes from the surrounding courtyards.

The owner kept a slate on the wall where he wrote the debts of regulars — not because he expected payment soon, but because trust was the currency of the village. He washed the glasses with vinegar, and if someone was ill, he used pure alcohol, just as kafenio owners across Cyprus did. cyprusfoodmuseum.comcyprusfoodmuseum.com. Items offered in a kafenio (traditional coffee shop). | Cyprus Food Museum

And always, there was the sound of the briki: the soft hiss of water meeting hot sand, the slow bubbling rise of the coffee, the gentle clink of porcelain cups.

As the years passed, the world outside changed. Cars replaced donkeys. Radios replaced storytellers. Younger villagers left for Limassol or abroad. But the old coffee shop remained, stubborn and steady, like an elder who refuses to leave his favourite chair.

Even when newer cafés appeared, with shiny machines and foreign drinks, the old men still came here — to the place where time moved slowly, where the chairs creaked with familiar voices, where the coffee tasted of memory.

And then, one by one, the elders passed on. The owner grew old. The chairs sat empty more often than full. But the room never lost its warmth. Even today, if you step inside, you can almost hear the echo of laughter, the scrape of a chair, the murmur of a story beginning.

The old coffee shop of Lania is more than a building. It is the **village's heartbeat**, preserved in wood, stone, and the lingering scent of roasted coffee. A place where generations gathered, argued, laughed, and lived — one tiny cup at a time