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WINDY CITY TIMES

SAVOR

Israeli TV chef talks food, family

BY MATT SIMONETTE

Despite being a prominent TV personality, food journalist and chef in Israel, Gil Hovav, who is gay, insists that he's "not that infatuated with food."

Hovav—who recently passed through Chicago on his way to a speaking engagement elsewhere in the States—explained, "I love food, but I don't think it's the most important thing in life. But still it's a part of everyone's life. We enjoy it, so why not?"

Even if Hovav is not infatuated with food, many in his country are.

"Israel, since the '80s, has been a foodie nation," he said. "People have become all about what they eat and what they drink. They're very interested in their food. ... Food is immense."



Gil Hovav.
PR photo

Despite his professed ambiguity towards food, Hovav has contributed to his nation's love for it; he's written and spoken for years about the nation's diverse cuisine, and promotes cooking at home. He comes from a prominent family; his great-grandfather, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, helped establish modern Hebrew as the nation's language.

Hovav and his partner, Daniel Halperin, have a teenage daughter, Naomi. He said that, "It is not really difficult, but not really 'special,'" to be

openly gay and a celebrity. "I'm 55-years-old. All of my gay and lesbian friends have children—all of them. Gay families are very strong in Israel."

Adoption by gay couples is more of a prominent social-issue than marriage is, he noted. Adoption by same-sex couples is technically legal, but opposite-sex couples are given preference by authorities.

"According to old laws, they are given first to religious Jewish families, and later, to [other]

straight families, but not to gay families. Later, it was in the Supreme Court, where the government said that, 'Adoption is very complicated—for the benefit of the child, maybe it would be better to live in a family that is ordinary.' That caused a huge outcry in Israel. Within one week, the state reversed its declaration, and the government said that that [same-sex couples adopting is 'kosher.' It still has to be legislated, but it is going to happen soon."

He added, "We still don't have marriage yet. You have to get married through the rabbinical system, which is of course not going to have gay marriage. Most of my secular friends don't get married according to this system—if they want to 'marry,' they just live together and that's it, or they go Cypress or someplace else. If they get married anywhere else, it's immediately recognized by the state, along with gay marriage."

He noted that he and his partner have been together for 30 years. However, he said, "We never bothered or tried to get married. I don't think it's important. It's an 'un-Israeli thing' to care about that."

Hovav, Halperin and Naomi live in the same neighborhood in Tel Aviv as Naomi's biological mother, he said. Naomi goes between the two houses, "like a happily divorced family," Hovav said, laughing.

Note: Restaurant profiles/events are based on invitations arranged from restaurants and/or firms.

more from TPAN's 30th anniversary

Photos by Vern Hester.





BILLY Masters

"I am definitely not your daddy."—**Nick Jonas** responds to a tweet saying "Nick Jonas is literally my daddy." I believe people should really learn the meaning of the words literally, figuratively and, in many cases, versatility.

After a month abroad, I am finally back on U.S. soil. While my trip was entertaining and enlightening, it was also exhausting. I don't believe I've ever been more tired than the 48 hours it took to travel home. At least that's the excuse I used for my outburst in the Athens airport, where I found myself screaming at a swarthy security guard, "What's it to you, you Greek bastard?" Note to self—avoid directing inflammatory remarks to anyone holding a rifle and a drug-sniffing dog near my crotch! As I apologized profusely, I got a better look at the officer from all angles and decided to—how shall we say—rectify the situation. After all, when in Greece...

The new TV season started, and many people were annoyed at how casually **Kevin Can Wait** dealt with the death of the matriarch, **Erinn Hayes**. Kevin complained that his late wife's gym was still sending her notices saying, "We miss you." He said, "It's been a year and I miss her, too. So, who wants pancakes?" And, poof, it was over.

Meanwhile, **Will & Grace** dealt with rewriting history with a wink and a nudge. As you'll recall, the original series finale flashed forward to Will and Grace's kids serendipitously meeting in college. In the new series premiere, Karen comes out of a daze and asks what happened to their kids who grew up and got married. Will says, "That never happened." Karen slyly replies, "What a relief—nobody wants to see you two raise kids." And that's that. The rest of the episode found the quartet regaining their familiar footing with a respectable script. Aside from the addition of a brass section to the theme song (it sounds like they're trying a bit too hard), I enjoyed it.

Any day now, we'll be getting a reboot of **Dynasty**. So it's fitting that one of the original series stars is back in the news. What makes it newsworthy is that **Gordon Thomson**, who played Adam, has come out of the closet. Of course, I can't imagine anyone is particularly surprised—the dark, brooding, chiseled-featured actor always came off as a snappy queen...and I say that with affection. If I'm not mistaken, during his "Dynasty" years he was married to a significantly older woman. Anyway, last week he officially came out as gay at the ripe old age of 72. He told *The Daily Beast* there was never any thought of doing so in the '80s, saying, "To come out would have been professional suicide, without question." Part of the issue was playing a leading man on a soap. "You're also a source of fantasy," he added. "Ian McKellen and Derek Jacobi are wonderful people but, pardon me, how many audience members fantasize about fucking either one of them? Really. It had a lot to do with what you looked like, I'm afraid." Meow!

Even in today's world, Thomson thinks looks



Nick Jonas had to correct someone, Billy says. Photo by Michael Loccisano

and money are the prime considerations when it comes to an actor contemplating going public about their sexuality. He thinks **Matt Bomer** is "extraordinarily good-looking and talented." But he doesn't think his coming out was much of a risk "because he has a rich, successful husband. He doesn't need his work to live." His candor extends to the topic of his old show returning to the airwaves. "I have had a look at the new *Dynasty* and I am appalled. What the fuck is *The CW* doing? It's utter shit."

Proving how times have changed, **Russell Tovey** seems to be working steadily, playing both straight and gay roles. He's just joined the cast of *Arrow*, where he will be someone called *The Ray*, a gay superhero who can channel light—like a human Clapper! He's scheduled to be in four episodes.

Sometimes a show is cast so well, it's worth taking a special trip to see it. That seems to be the case with the production of *The Rocky Horror Show* at the Bucks County Playhouse in Pennsylvania. They've enlisted the services (so to speak) of three of our favorite fellas. **Randy Harrison** will be playing Dr. Frank-N-Furter, **Nick Cearley** is playing Brad and **Nick Adams** is playing Rocky. And, you know, there are other people in the show who I'm sure are fine. This sizzlingly stellar cast hits the stage Oct. 13-29.

Leave **Kim Cattrall** alone—it's not true. We're defining "it" as the story that she single-handedly torpedoed *Sex and the City 3*. A British rag claims that the flick was ready to start filming this fall when Cattrall's diva demands brought everything to a screeching halt. As if! Kim even went public denying the report, posting, "The only 'DEMAND' I ever made was that I didn't want to do a 3rd film ... & that was back in 2016." One part of the report is true—Cattrall does have other films in development, but she never used their status as leverage for a third "SATC" flick. In

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fact, my sources say no discussions on the topic ever happened.

I may be back on native soil, but our "Ask Billy" question this week comes from across the pond. Lloyd of London asks, "Did you Yanks get Queers yet? It's great and I think you'd definitely enjoy it."

Queers is a BBC series of eight 15-minute monologues commemorating the 50 years since the UK's Sexual Offenses Act of 1967, which decriminalized homosexual acts. Each of the monologues is handled by a different actor, including such luminaries as **Alan Cumming**, **Russell Tovey** and **Ben Whishaw**. While the whole thing will air on BBC America on Oct. 14, we'll post the aforementioned three on *BillyMasters.com*.

When I'm looking forward to clapping on Russell Tovey, it's definitely time to end yet another column. Be sure to check out *www.BillyMasters.com*, the site that's queer as folk. If you have a question for me, dash it off to *BillyMasters.com* and I promise to get back to you before I stuff someone's grape leaf! So, until next time, remember: One man's filth is another man's bible.

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