



## Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam

April 21, 1943 - October 23, 2025

Kozhaya Merchid Karam, 82, of Cortland, NY, passed away peacefully at home Thursday October 23, 2025, surrounded by his loving family. Born and raised in Lebanon, he married Nassima Kortbawi, and together they raised their family of five children, following the Maronite Christian faith. Kozhaya traveled the world working as a chef in France and throughout the Arab countries, enjoying a successful culinary career. Before immigrating to the U.S. in 1986, where he came to start the immigration process for his family, he ultimately settled in Cortland, NY, in 1996, where he and his wife established Pita Gourmet on Main Street. At the age of 54, he and Nassima built a successful restaurant and became pillars of the community in Cortland.

Kozhaya was known for his amazing culinary talent, his love for his wife and family, and his hard work and sacrifice. He always invited and welcomed people into his home, gracing them with his hospitality, and enjoyed sharing his cooking. He loved dancing with his grandkids with his infamous “Jido moves”, working with his wife in the garden and bringing his family together. His knefe breakfasts will be a tradition that lives on in our hearts.

He was preceded in death by his wife of sixty years, Nassima Kortbawi Karam.

He is survived by his five children and their families: George (Therese) Karam,

Charbel (Hanna) Karam, Carlos (Helene) Karam, Mireille (Mark) Lewis, and Madona (Elie) Haykal. He was a beloved grandfather to thirteen grandchildren: Izek, Rackelle (Jody Leonard), Sarah (Noel Hajj) Karam, Rebecca (Taylor) Dale, Patricia (Zach) Lovell, Marcus (Emily DeFillipo), Jacob, Adam Karam, Maureen, Mark II, Mathew Lewis, Selena (Jordan Nicotera), and Anthony Haykal. He also leaves behind two cherished great-grandchildren, Harper Lovell and Cameron Dale.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Monday, Oct 27, at 10:30 AM at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, followed by a receiving line and the Christian Rite of Committal and burial in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. Contributions in Kozhaya's memory may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, Tennessee 38105. Arrangements are under the direction of Riccardi Funeral Home, Cortland, N.Y. Condolences may also be shared at [www.riccardifuneralhome.com](http://www.riccardifuneralhome.com)

# Tribute Wall

SL

“ Please accept our sincere condolences regarding the passing of Kozhaya Karam. We missed the obituary for his lovely wife Nassima when she passed, but wish to express our sadness over her loss as well.

*Sincerely, Steve & Frances Littlefield*

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**Stephen & Frances Littlefield** - October 30, 2025 at 06:40 AM

YR

“ Yee R. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam.

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**Yee R.** - October 27, 2025 at 12:10 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam.



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October 27, 2025 at 09:06 AM

MS

“ Mike & Liz Sima planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam.

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**Mike & Liz Sima** - October 27, 2025 at 09:06 AM

TF

“ the Heyer family purchased the Simply Elegant S pathiphyllum for the family of Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam.



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the Heyer family - October 25, 2025 at 11:52 AM

TF

“ the Heyer family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Kozhaya Merchid Karam.

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the Heyer family - October 25, 2025 at 11:52 AM