

The Sheik puts focus on fresh, healthy cuisine

By KEELY WYGONIK
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Sipping a glass of freshly squeezed carrot apple juice, Dean Hachem, owner of The Sheik restaurant, is relaxed, yet keeping a watchful eye on diners seated around him.

"It's not that he's nervous, Hachem just wants to make sure everyone is happy and comfortable in the newly opened restaurant at Laurel Park Place in Livonia.

"He graduated from the University of Michigan with a degree in industrial and mechanical engineering, but missed being on the floor of a restaurant talking to people.

"Serving fresh healthy food, this is our joy," he said. Hachem put his engineering degree to work supervising restaurant renovations with much attention to detail.

"His friend, Hashim Altowil created the restaurant's mosaic murals. A magic carpet decorates the top of the bar, the chandeliers and antiques were imported from the Middle East. Inlaid wood tables were special ordered, as were the Italian chairs.

The Sheik
Where: Laurel Park Place, 37716 W. Six Mile Road, Livonia, (734) 464-7400
Open: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to midnight Friday-Saturday.
Atmosphere: Comfortable mixture of tables and booths. Mosaic murals, antiques and imported light fixtures transport diners to another world.
Menu: Middle Eastern. Kid's menu includes wing dings, hamburger, chicken tenders served with fries.
Cost: Moderate. Lunch specials \$5.95-\$7.95, served 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday. Carryout available, to fax your order call (734) 464-1133.
Reservations: Recommended for parties of six or more
Credit cards: All majors accepted
Extras: Banquet room seats 150 people, full bar, summer patio, catering.
Other locations
■ West Bloomfield — 4189 Orchard Lake Road, (248) 865-0000
■ The Midfield Terminal — Metro Airport, scheduled to open in December

Cozy atmosphere
"We're trying to create a nice, cozy, relaxing atmosphere so people can enjoy tasting our homemade food and freshly squeezed juices," said Hachem.
A former Livonia resident, Hachem recently moved to West Bloomfield where he opened his first Sheik restaurant.
"We've been looking for a Livonia location for the last two years," he said. "It's one of the top cities in the U.S. There's a

lot of foot traffic in the mall, we'll have a summer patio."
So far the response has been very good. "Customers are coming, and going out happy," said Hachem. "Our food is fresh and exactly like you eat in a home. I try to make sure everyone has something they like."

The Sheik's menu contains the usual Middle Eastern fare — hummous, Baba Ghannooj, grape leaves, falafel, tabbouli, lamb and chicken shawarma, shish kofta, kibbee, and some surprises too.

Pita bread is made fresh on the premises, and freshly squeezed juice selections include exotic fresh smoothies made with strawberries, banana and honey, mixed with your choice of mango, guava, papaya, apple or orange juice.

There's a Caesar salad, three different spinach salads, and an almond rice salad.

Seafood
Entrees include some seafood items not traditionally found in Middle Eastern restaurants — shrimp, tuna or sword fish kabob, salmon fillet, red snapper and white fish. Sautéed shrimp and swordfish, Shrimp Scampi, Shrimp Ghallaba, Shrimp and

Swordfish Ghallaba round out the seafood menu.

You'll find lamb on the menu of most Middle Eastern restaurants, but you probably won't see baby lamb ribs, marinated and grilled with barbecue sauce, which are offered at The Sheik.

Vegetarians will dig this restaurant. A vegetarian combo for one features falafel, hummous, tabbouli, Baba Ghannooj, vegetarian grape leaves and mjadars (lentils, cracked wheat and sautéed onions) served with a salad.

Hachem points to the combos for two, the Desert Feast for Four, and The Sheik Delight for six to eight people. The combos include a variety of appetizers and are the perfect way to introduce friends to Middle Eastern cuisine.

"Our food is not spicy," said Hachem when asked to explain some of the seasonings used in Middle Eastern cuisine. "We use oregano, cumin, lemon juice, olive oil and garlic."

Chef Rudy Rammal has 25 years of experience. He attended culinary school in Lebanon and trained in Paris. Prior to moving to Michigan, Rammal worked at Al Ameer in New York City.

"We bring Middle Eastern food to a higher level with the presentation and atmosphere of the restaurant," he said.

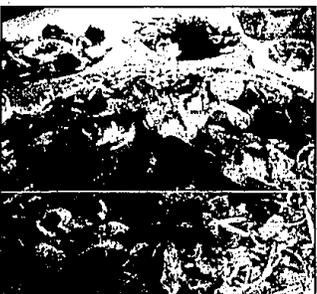
The Sheik also has a full bar. In addition to the usual choices, the wine list includes Middle Eastern and French wines, available by the bottle or glass. There



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRYAN MITCHELL
At your service: Dean and Andrea Hachem at the new Sheik restaurant in Livonia

are eight different beers on tap. Try Almaz-Diamond a Lebanese beer that's pilsner in style.
To recommend a restaurant to feature on the Dining page, send menu to Keely Wygonik, assistant managing editor features, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax (734) 591-7273.

Beautiful presentation: The Sheik Delight platter serves 6 to 8 people. It includes a variety of Middle Eastern dishes, appetizers, and salad.



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