

## DINING

## Cleopatra's extends her charms to Wayne

BY RENÉE SNOGLUND  
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The much-loved Cleopatra's in Westland has done us a big favor by opening a second location in Wayne. Anyone who has ever sampled the restaurant's delicious Lebanese cuisine and gracious hospitality knows the only thing better than one Cleopatra's is two.

The restaurants are not clones. The Westland location, the "blue" Cleopatra's, is small and intimate with a very loyal following. The larger "red" Cleopatra's in Wayne is also a nightclub, complete with a dance floor and Arabic entertainment on weekends 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. It also has a special "argeeleh" room for those fond of sharing the traditional Arabic waterpipe (mild tobacco mixed with fruit flavors).

However... "It's the same good food and good service," said owner Nawf Abou-dib, a full-time teacher who helps her husband, Tony, at the restaurants on school breaks and weekends.

## Good food

Cleopatra's good food includes the creamiest hummus in town, the freshest tabbouleh and luncheon specials - served on a large silver platter with hummus, salad and rice - that defy consumption at a single sitting. And if you haven't tried the galabiah - a spicy stew with either chicken or meat, green peppers, onions, mushrooms and garlic - well, you're missing a real tasty dish. Just don't forget the breath mints.

"We're not like other Arabic restaurants that cut the ingredients for galabiah ahead of time. We cut and cook when the customer asks for it," said Tony's niece, Vera, who manages Cleopatra's in Westland.

Mike Carrigan, who works at State Farm Insurance in Livonia, often visits the Westland location. "I've been working in Livonia for just a little over a year, and I've been here 15 times. You can say that Carrigan goes for the baked chicken on Thursdays," he said.

**Cleopatra's**  
Where: 35159 E. Michigan Ave., Wayne, (734) 641-7390, (734) 641-9030  
Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. Friday; noon to 2 a.m. Saturday; noon to 10 a.m. Sunday



Menu: Lebanese cuisine, including daily specials. Moderately priced. Alcohol served. Carryouts and catering available. Atmosphere: Open, airy, lots of artwork by owner's son. Dance floor and bar area. Entertainment: Arabic music, including singer, on Friday and Saturday nights after 10:30 p.m.

Credit cards: All major, except Diners Club.  
■ Westland location: 7088 Wayne Road, Westland, (734) 427-2100. Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday; noon to 10 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday.

Lots of people go for the baked chicken, a Thursday entree special. It's a succulent one-half chicken baked with olive oil, lemon and spices. Many people call ahead to reserve it, said Vera. They also call ahead for the lamb shanks, served on Friday. The shanks, cooked slowly in tomato sauce and fresh carrots, are fall-off-the-bone tender.

"I have four lamb shanks reserved for tonight," said Vera. "One time I had a customer come in who heard about the lamb shanks. He ordered four. When I told him I only had two, he left and came back the next week."

But as any customer knows, good food can lose its flavor fast if a restaurant lacks hospitality. That's never been true at Cleopatra's. "They tell me they feel like home here," said Vera. "It's so cozy here. And we give them our time. Even if we are busy, we talk to them."

Vera said she has one customer who feels so at home he serves himself his lemonade and brings his dirty dishes back to the kitchen.

I have been dining at Cleopatra's in Westland for years and

have introduced countless others to its charms, even those at first reluctant to try Lebanese fare. I've persuaded them to try all sorts of dishes, including the baked potato kibbeh (my husband's favorite), mujadra (lentils cooked with rice and topped with sautéed sliced onions) and burghul, a true comfort food of cooked cracked wheat, tomatoes and green pepper.

Larry Bogas and John Cibrario, both Westland attorneys, are super loyal Cleopatra's fans. Both attended the recent grand opening in Wayne.

"I know a little bit about Lebanese food, and I've found this to be... well, it's the closest to my mother's cooking that I can find," said Bogas.

"All I can say about the food is it's phenomenal," said Cibrario, who confessed to eating at Cleopatra's three times a week.

Nawf Abou-Dib is confident Cleopatra's in Wayne will meet the same success as its Westland counterpart. It's already busy come late Friday and Saturday nights. She's hoping the city of Wayne will soon grant her a license for a professional belly



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRIAN MITCHELL

**Your hosts:** Tony and Nawf Abou-Dib are ready to welcome both old and new customers to Cleopatra's in Wayne.

dancer.

"This is an art, pure and high-class. To attract an American crowd, it would be nice to have a

belly dancer," she said.

However, with or without a belly dancer, Cleopatra's is a pleaser. Nawf, Tony, and Vera

continue to treat everyone like guests. "I just enjoy introducing people to our food and our way of life," said Nawf.



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