

FRESH & TASTY

NOTES ON
NOSHING IN
THE INLAND NW

CASUAL Turkish Delight

My love affair with Turkish coffee begins with hospitality and ritual. Powder-fine ground coffee is placed in a handled pot called an *ibrik*, with cold water, a dash of sugar and a hint of cardamom. The coffee must bubble up three times, until a thick skim of foam tops the mixture. After letting the grounds settle, the infusion is poured carefully into a *finjan*, a tiny china cup smaller than a demitasse. This nectar is unlike any other coffee you've ever had – strong and thick, almost viscous, yet without a hint of bitterness.

Real honest-to-God Turkish coffee is just one of the delights at **D'ZAAR**, the new lunch place that's moved into the café space at the MAC, on the main floor. The menu is filled with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern specialties: Lebanese salad (greens, cucumbers, tomatoes and herbs tossed with lemon juice and olive oil), gyros (beef, lamb or chicken), hummus (four varieties, your choice of a platter or a wrap) and the intriguing *jadra*, a savory blend of lentils, rice, onion and cumin that's sort of like Arab soul food.

"Our food is simple, just a few ingredients," says Victor Azar, who owns and runs the place along with his sister Viola. (Another sister runs Azar's on North Monroe, and a cousin heads up Azar's Express on East Sprague.) "We wanted it to be trendy but simple, with everything made from scratch. We infuse our dishes with the tastes we remember, using my mother's methods of cooking, and the flavors from her home in Nazareth."

The brother-sister duo also run a catering company by the same name, and they feed hundreds of workers daily at two of the area's largest corporate cafeterias: Avista Corp. and Triumph Composite Systems.

To complement the Turkish coffee, check out the desserts – the family-recipe baklava, rich with butter, nuts and honey; or the harisah, a surprisingly delicious baked treat made with cream of wheat, yogurt, butter, honey and a hint of rose essence.

— ANN M. COLFORD

D'Zaar at the MAC, 2316 W. First Ave., is open Tue-Sun 11 am-4 pm. Visit www.dzaar.com or call 363-5338.



D'Zaar food is art inside the MAC. [Chris Bovey photo]

EVENTS Culinary Showdown

Chefs love to show off their culinary prowess in competitions. TV shows such as Food Network's *Challenge*, *Iron Chef* and *Throwdown with Bobby Flay* have capitalized on the popularity of celebrity chefs battling it out in front of audiences then awaiting the judges' decisions on the merits of their hastily prepared creations.

It's been three years since Spokane has hosted a **BATTLE OF THE CHEFS**, and local chefs have been honing their skills in preparation for this long-awaited competition. This weekend, eight area chefs will go head to head in a two-day cook-off at the Spokane Women's Show.

"We have two groups of four chefs each competing on Saturday," says Patty Seebeck, organizer of the event and a dietician with Rockwood Clinic. "The top four chefs go against each other in a semi-final event on Sunday, then it's pared down to two chefs battling in the finals."

Those showmen/chefs include Brett Fontana of the Hayden Lake Country Club and Adam Hegsted from Coeur d'Alene's Brix Restaurant, representing North Idaho; Kelly Thornton and Tim Hartman from Vin Rouge and Meritage restaurants in Spokane; established veterans Adam Stefani of C.I. Shenanigan's and Charles Davidson of Twigs; URM executive chef L.J. Klink; and Tom Nichols of Downriver Grill.

There are also some new twists in this year's battle.

"The chefs will bring their own equipment – their favorite sauté pan or special plates for presentation – but only what can fit in one shopping bag," Seebeck explains. "There's also a \$1,000 prize for the winner."

So how does it work? When the chefs take the stage, they'll receive the same mystery ingredients – a protein, fruit and vegetable – to incorporate into a dish. The chefs will have 30 minutes to create a one-plate entrée that will be judged on heart-healthy guidelines. Mystery ingredients will change for the semi-finals and finals.

"These chefs all love to show off their creativity," Seebeck says. "They're sexy, savvy, and they put on a good show."

— SUSAN HAMILTON

The Battle of the Chefs is Saturday, March 17, at 12:30 and 1:30 pm and Sunday, March 18, at 2 and 3 pm at the Spokane Convention Center. Tickets are \$5.

Wedding Service

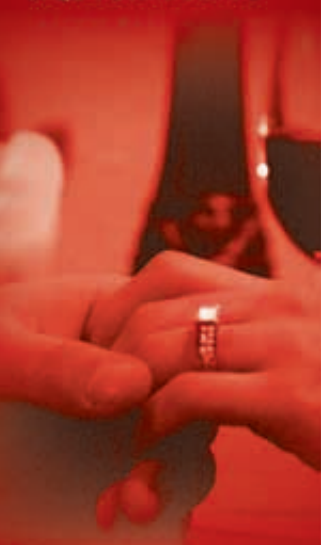
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