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DINING OUT

Turkish cuisine is on the menu

By Amneris Solano
Staff writer

TURKISH GRILL

Address: 5044 Yadkin Road

- Phone: 864-6554
- Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Saturday; 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday
- Specialities: Kebabs, salads and Gyros

A meal at the Turkish Grill is akin to being a guest in a friend's home.

Owners Frances and Seyfi Kalender greet customers by offering them a cup of Turkish tea as they walk in the door of the Yadkin Road restaurant.

Want something off the menu? Sure. No problem. They'll whip it up for you.

"If somebody wants something special, all they have to do is ask," Frances said. "Just tell us a day or two in advance to make sure we have all the ingredients, especially if it's not on the menu."

It's a level of hospitality, the couple says, that they pride themselves on.

"It's the customer's choice," said Seyfi, who is originally from Turkey and has been in the United States for about 20 years. "I'm working for the customer."

The husband-and-wife team moved from Pennsylvania about three months ago to open the restaurant. It's been a lifelong dream for Seyfi, who has worked in restaurants and has a deep passion for cooking and sharing his food with others.

"I married him for his pizza," Frances says, laughing. "His pizza is out of this world."

Seyfi does the cooking at Turkish Grill, which serves traditional Turkish cuisine. He makes everything fresh except the pita bread. Seyfi's recipes are ones he learned by watching and helping his mother cook in the kitchen.

"So it's not really recipes that are passed down generation to generation," Frances says. "It's by learning through experience."

The kebabs are the stars of the grill's menu. Kebabs come in a variety of meats including lamb, beef and chicken or falafel. Kebabs are served on pita bread and topped with lettuce, onion, tomato and a yogurt-cucumber-mint sauce.

Prices range from \$5.95 to \$7.95. Sandwich plates include a choice of fries or rice and garden salad or shepherd's salad. Shepherd's salad is chopped tomato, cucumber, parsley and green onion in a vinaigrette. Plates cost \$7.95 to \$9.95. Other offerings include hummus and stuffed grape leaves, both for \$4.75.

After the new year, the Kalenders said they plan to add lesser-known Turkish delicacies to the menu including fish and vegetarian dishes, soups and stuffed pastries.

The restaurant, which seats about 30, is in a shopping center on Yadkin Road in a spot once occupied by Munchies. Turkish travel posters decorate the white walls. One wall was left blank in honor of the military. Patrons are allowed to hang photos and other memorabilia on that wall as it relates to their military service or as a tribute to those who have served. It's the couple's way of giving back, they say.



Owners Seyfi and Frances Kalender say they strive to create a relaxed atmosphere so that customers can enjoy the dishes Seyfi Kalender prepares.

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Customers order at the counter. The couple offers dine-in eating or take-out for lunch and dinner. The restaurant offers catering as well.

“They come. They’ll sit. They’ll eat. They’ll sit here for hours just sitting and talking,” Frances says. “Never do I give them a bill at the table. When they’re ready to get up then they can come and pay. I don’t want people to feel rushed here.”

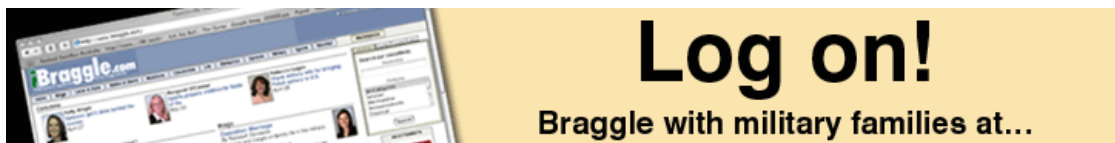
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