

Belly Dancing the Night Away at Turkish Grill

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Written by Tim Wilkins
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When most people combine the words "Fayetteville" and "exotic dancing," the mental picture that comes to mind usually involves g-strings and dollar bills.

However, the most exotic dancing in these parts does not necessarily include girls with pasties and porn star names; over at the Turkish Grill on Yadkin Road there is a renaissance of one of civilization's oldest, most sensual, and, most respected dances.

Every Friday and Saturday night, Leyla and Nadia provide traditional belly dancing to go along with the restaurant's traditional Turkish and Middle-Eastern fare of gyros, kebabs, kofte, humus and falafel.

Owners Francis and Seyfi Kalendar say the accompaniment of belly dancing with a meal is very common in Turkey and across the Arabic world, especially in the finer, more expensive restaurants. Francis adds that bringing the dance of the seven veils to Fayetteville has been wildly successful at the Turkish Grill, which has been open about 15 months.



If you do drop in to check out the restaurant's sensual dervishes doing their thing, Francis says to remember there is a certain etiquette to tipping ... this isn't, after all, amateur night down on Bragg Boulevard.

"We're trying to introduce the proper way of tipping a dancer, which is to shower them with the mone; — culturally, that is the way it is done," said Francis. "We sit here and have a good time. It's like a fur family atmosphere. At the end of the night everybody is up dancing; more so the women ... The men are a little bit shy. Everyone is clapping and whistling.

"We have a lot of fun," said Francis. "Last night I didn't get home until 4 a.m. Everybody leaves here after belly dancing night with smiles on their faces."

Perhaps the biggest smile is reserved for Nadia Davis, the featured dancer. Nadia is a native of Iraq where she grew up surrounded by the culture of belly dancing. She says that while her soldier husband was stationed in Germany she began amateur belly dancing for friends and it grew from there. She now has been dancing professionally at the Turkish Grill for about a year.

"My husband liked to see me dancing," said Nadia. "I have loved to dance since I was a kid. I had n outfit when I started. My friends brought gifts the first time, including cash, because they wanted to push me to dance. My husband sent me a lot of stuff from India and Afghanistan when he was stationed there."

Both Nadia and Francis said that belly dancers tend to "mix and match" outfits, as there aren't exact a plethora of belly dancing outfitters populating the street corners of downtown Fayetteville.

As for her music of choice, Nadia says she mixes traditional with modern tunes ... utilizing whatever "moves" her. She mixes the exotic rhythms as easily as she does her exotic clothing into a combination of dance moves gleaned from her childhood in Baghdad.

"I mix it up," said Nadia. "I can't dance to the music unless I'm feeling it. If it's not touching my feelings I cannot dance. We have many types different dances in Iraq — in Baghdad it is different ... in the south of Iraq it's different. So I take from this and that and mix.

"And the music I use is not especially traditional," said Nadia, "it's been remade more modern. I don't like the fast music ... I like to feel and enjoy the music."

If you would like a taste of this exotic dancing as well as the Turkish Grill's exotic, yet healthy, food, come by the restaurant every Friday or Saturday night beginning at 7. The dancing usually lasts until about 10 p.m.; however, as Francis said, sometimes the dancing lasts deep into the night.

The Turkish Grill is located at 5044 Yadkin Road. For more information, call 864-6554, or check out the restaurant's Web site at www.turkishgrill.net.

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