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PINECREST

Daily Bread A Delight To The Senses

■ The Daily Bread Market offers healthy, kid-friendly Mediterranean food for eat-in and take-out.

BY CHRIS MAYO

For The Miami Herald

Eleven-year-old Gianna Riccardi loves to visit Daily Bread Market in Pinecrest. She smiles and nods when asked if she likes the food she is happily eating.

"Her favorites are the pita bread with hummus and the kibbie," her mom, Florence Riccardi, said. "We come here all the time because I like to go to a place where they want to please you. This is such a nice family. It's like they welcome you into their home."

Toufic Mazzawi and his wife Rima have owned and operated Daily Bread at the same location, 12131 S. Dixie Hwy., since 1978. The shop specializes in Greek and Mediterranean foods for take-out and catering. There also is in-store seating for 25 people.

Their two sons, Shaddy and Nicolas, work a lot behind the counter. Both are learning the family business.

"I'm starting to let them run it," Toufic Mazzawi said. "They'll probably be taking over completely within a couple of years."

"Daily Bread is becoming more and more a place where young people want to eat," he said. "They come in all the time. The kids with their families. The high school kids after school. They say they like it better than the regular fast food."

The food they speak of is not only healthy, it is of ancient times. Freshly prepared on site and kept hot behind the counter, these dishes are a delight to the senses.

Shaddy and Nicolas Mazzawi greet everyone like old friends as they quickly serve platters of falafel (chickpeas, parsley and onions), kibbie (cracked wheat, ground beef and onions), gyro (roasted lamb and beef), shish tawook (marinated and grilled chicken), kafta (ground lamb and beef with parsley and onions) and shawarma (marinated roasted chicken).

All platters come with tabouli salad, marinated cabbage with onions, hummus with olive oil, and two pieces of warm pita bread, white or whole wheat. There are also Greek salads, Spanakopita (spinach pie with feta cheese in phyllo dough), and sandwiches with variations of the basic ingredients. Most range in price from \$5.95 to \$7.95.

"We're planning to add some rice dishes," Shaddy Mazzawi said as he proudly talked about the Pinecrest store. There is another Daily Bread in Coconut Grove owned by his uncle.

In the grocery section, you can find phyllo pastry dough, figs, dates, taramosalata (a Greek-style caviar spread), labaneh yogurt cheese spread, Greek cheeses, and many kinds of olives. There are also natural soaps containing olive oil, Ceylon teas from Sri Lanka, herbs from Jordan, Majool dates from California, all kinds of nuts and seasonal dried fruits, and baklava.

There are delicate blown-glass oil burners made locally. Beautiful hookahs decorate the shelves. There are large tins of olive oil. There are other spices and foods from Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Turkey and Armenia.

"My mother is from Jerusalem and my father is from Nazareth. They are Christian and have been in the United States since the 1960s. They met here. My brother and I were born here," Shaddy Mazzawi said.

He said his first language was Arabic. You can hear many tongues spoken in the store, including Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Greek and Hebrew.

Carole and Dan DeBonis of Snapper Creek eat at Daily Bread a lot. On a recent afternoon they were there with their son Vincent, 9, who loves the hummus and pita bread. Dan's mother, Brigitte, was visiting from Fort Lauderdale and ordered a pita wrap. Carole's twin sister, Lisa Kier of Kendall, was there, too, with her daughter Nicole, 9. Nicole said she loves the grilled chicken.

"Most of the food here doesn't have dairy" ingredients, Carole DeBonis said. She likes that because her son is allergic to dairy. Dan DeBonis said he loves to cook with the spices he finds at Daily Bread.

A sport fishing captain, DeBonis is Italian. "I take lamb with these seasonings and put it in a wok. It's delicious," he said.

My hearty Daily Bread lunch was the falafel platter, and I took home some honey-sweet halvah which towers like sand castles on the counter as you walk in. I chose the vanilla-and-pistachio and the marble flavors because Shaddy Mazzawi said they are the favorites.

"We have a little bit of everything here," he said. But don't go to Daily Bread on Sunday because it is closed. "We need a day of rest," his father said.