

Pinecrest

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Stop in at the Daily Bread for authentic Middle Eastern food

Yum! I have just finished a scrumptious lunch — a most flavorful whole-wheat pita pocket stuffed to the brim with fresh veggies, hummus and tabouli. Then, to top it off, half of a spinach and feta cheese-filled phylo dough Spinakopita. With some will power, I am saving some for my husband, who also loves Greek and Mediterranean food.

I had heard about Pinecrest's Daily Bread and Market, 12131 S. Dixie Hwy., from some friends who share my affinity for this type of food; you know, the healthy, flavorful, colorful kind. They told me to check it out, the store had improved and there were now tables to sit at for a real lunch or dinner.

During all my 18 years of living in Pinecrest, I am ashamed to say that I have passed the Daily Bread at its Suniland South location on South Dixie Highway and 121st Street a zillion times. I've used the other stores in the mall — The Creative Look hair salon and the costume store — but never made my way over to the Daily Bread, which has been at this same location for 28 years.

Originally from Nazareth, owner Toufic Mazzawi came to Miami when he was 14 years old "in order to get a good education." His parents started the Daily Bread Bakery and later he and his brothers opened three Daily Bread restaurants, all featuring the delicious fresh-baked pita and other breads.

Mazzawi and his brother owned the store at 2400 SW 27th Ave. together, but then decided to let his brother take it over. He then opened the Pinecrest store and the Daily Bread South Beach Market next to Joe's Stone Crab, at 840 SW 1st St.

"Because of its incredible location, I saw an opportunity to renovate it and turn it into a Middle Eastern restaurant and nightclub," said Mazzawi. "It's going to be fabulous — complete with incredible food and belly dancers."

The new venue is slated to open in late September.

The Pinecrest location is a bit



more tame, the clean environment enhanced by the racks of spices, rice, nuts, and containers of olives and grape leaves. The simple setting offers 10 tables surrounded by a colorful mural of eggplants and zucchinis. Even at 10:30 a.m. there was a steady stream of customers mulling in and out, each person requesting a specific food or searching for a special cooking ingredient.

Perhaps it was a Mujadra (lentil salad), Greek Salad (with Feta), Tabouli (parsley), Grilled Chicken or a Shawarma (beef) Salad. Maybe they were in the mood for a Falafel (chick pea), Kibbie (cracked wheat, meat, onion), Kafta Kabob (lamb), Shish Tawook (grilled chicken) or a Shawarma sandwich. All are served with tabouli, hummus, salad and two pieces of pita bread. Still hungry? Daily Bread serves its own version of the Chop Chop with chicken or beef topped with special dressing and pita bread. There's nowhere else that you can get this kind of quality food costing just \$3.95 to \$5.95 per person.

Mazzawi's sister-in-law, Louisa Joseph, proudly navigated through the array of dried fruits, mouthwatering sweets such as Burma, Bird's Nest, cashew burma, Halvah, Pistachio and Walnut Baklava and a vast selection of dried peaches, apricots, figs, pineapple, papaya and prunes.

"Dates are the most popular," Joseph said. "So is the Greek Salad and

Falafel Sandwich in pita with a choice of spicy or plain tahini."

Apparently, customers also show a preference for Kalamata olives, one of five olive choices at the store, while the French Feta cheese rates number one out of the Armenian String, Sheep's Milk and Syrian Cheeses. Not to mention the fresh yogurts packed in oil for preservation.

"The food here is delicious, so fresh and healthy," said West Kendall resident Carolina Azari. "I would rather spend money here than eat at McDonalds."

Azari, who attends Florida International University's dietetic program, explained that the Middle Eastern foods are generally healthier because they are fresh, unprocessed and made with olive oil, the "good" unsaturated fat.

"We have the same customers come in every day and we know what they want," said Joseph. "Everything is made fresh daily and no preservatives are used."

Since the renovation eight months ago, Mazzawi says business is up more than 80 percent. Cooks, too, will be happy with the selection of ingredients coming from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Greece and Israel. The dates, grape leaves and pistachio nuts are grown in California, which has a similar climate to the Middle East. There are also the popular Kosher treats from Ilana's in Hollywood, Florida.

Fresh herbs and spices, marinated veggies, tahini, seeds, pastas, jellies, teas, coffees, brushcetta mix, couscous, orzo, Moroccan sardines, sheets of Phylo dough and Lebanese and lavash bread which, according to Joseph, make fabulous "pinwheel" wraps, spread with hummus and layered with vegetables, meats or tabouli.

"These delicacies make great finger foods for entertaining," said Joseph. "There is a trend to use bulgur wheat instead of rice. I make a bulgur pilaf with fat-free-chicken broth and tomato paste that is not only delicious, but acceptable on my Weight Watcher's program."

Lots of meatless dishes make Middle Eastern fare popular with vegetarians, too.

Whether it's taking out, eating in, or catering for up to 300, Mazzawi's philosophy is to provide the freshest, best quality, tastiest food to his customers.

"We just want to make people happy with fresh and delicious food from the Daily Bread," he said.

And that's not hard to do for large groups. Parties complete with belly dancers, music and food can cost between \$15-\$35 per person. And there's more than food. The Daily Bread sells Armenian, Greek and Lebanese cookbooks and CDs, beautiful glass perfume bottles, belly dancing adornments, olive oils, Orange Blossom, Rose and "Gripe" water (to soothe cranky babies), and hard-to-find Persian cold wax hair remover.

Oh, what the heck, I purchased some more Mujadra, Tabouli, Eggplant dip and these really flavorful, crispy pita chips. Sounds like a great dinner to me.

The Daily Bread is open 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, until 7 p.m. on Saturday, and it is closed on Sunday.

For more information, call 305-253-6115.

Ideas for Inside Pinecrest?
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