

DINING OUT



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

The Jerusalem Cafe, which for years has offered authentic Mediterranean food in downtown Vancouver, now has a second location at 516 S.E. Chkalov Drive.

Cafe gives a taste of the Middle East

WHERE: 516 S.E. Chkalov Drive, No. 45, Vancouver; 360-891-1490; second location at 106 E. Evergreen Blvd., Vancouver, 360-906-0306

MENU: Traditional Middle Eastern dishes, including falafel (ground garbanzo beans, potatoes, garlic, parsley, onion and spices rolled into a ball and fried), hummus (ground garbanzo beans mixed with tahini, garlic and lemon, topped with parsley and olive oil), tabouli (parsley, green onion, tomato, cucumber and bulgur wheat topped with olive oil and lemon) and babaghanooj (smoked and roasted eggplant mixed with tahini sauce, garlic and lemon, topped with olive oil and parsley). There also are meals that feature kabobs, schnitzel and charbroiled meats. Most dishes come with pita bread and various toppings, such as mayonnaise mixed with steamed vegetables as well as cabbage and a Mediterranean salsa.

DRINKS: Soda, juice, tea, coffee and lemonade, plus beer and wine

PRICE RANGE: Breakfast with

eggs is \$5.99; light meals, such as falafel and babaghanooj, range from \$4.99 to \$6.49; meat dishes range from \$5.99 to \$12.99; pita bread sandwiches start at \$2.99, with meat available at \$4.99.

SCENE: The same Nazareth family that owns the downtown Jerusalem Cafe, the Farrans, expanded to Cascade Park about seven months ago, re-creating a feel of Israel inside a standard strip mall space. That decorating theme centers around browns and earth tones, with painted stone archways and a large mural of old Jerusalem's Complex of the Holy Sepulcher. Even the fluorescent light screens have swirls of brown paint on them to dim the light and set the mood, complemented by Middle Eastern music. It's a clean place, and the staff seems eager to explain the nuances of the meal, from the pita to the intricacies of the falafel and tahini. Even though meats are a major part of the menu, there are several vegetarian options, too, and everything apparently is made from scratch.

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, closed on Sundays.

IN MY OPINION: Whether giving Middle Eastern food a first try or making it a staple of your diet, you will find that the Jerusalem Cafe is one of the area's best options. Meals taste fresh and flavorful, although probably somewhat exotic to more sheltered tongues. What this cafe calls a "light" meal was more than I could eat comfortably. The diversity of the tastes was refreshing. The decor looks like a new restaurant, not quite filled out yet, but what's here so far appears to be a good start. The location isn't particularly desirable, in a nondescript strip mall near Fred Meyer's, but once inside, the site doesn't seem that significant. Those looking for this type of food should be satisfied by the experience.

HEALTH SCORE: 100 in November 2002 (The Columbian does not review restaurants that score below 90 percent in Washington.)

— Brett Oppegaard

lunch spot

JERUSALEM CAFE



The Columbian