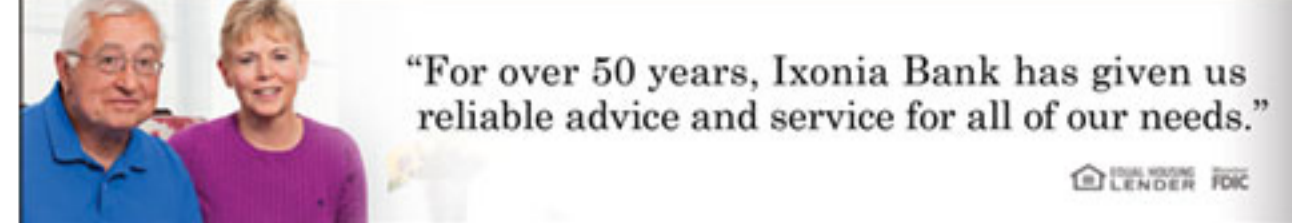


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Opinion

Meli brings Mediterranean to downtown Waukesha



By Sheila Nero

Sept. 14, 2015

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Meli, a recent addition to downtown Waukesha, is a bridge between Mediterranean and American cuisines and is authentic to both.

At the site of the former Generations at 5 Points, Meli is in the right place at the right time to catch downtown foot traffic during Friday Night Live outdoor concerts, which continue through Sept. 25.

Liazar Konda, a native of Athens, and Nicko Sifnaios, whose parents are natives of Greece, co-own Meli. The menu blends influences from Lebanon, Spain, Italy and Turkey, in addition to Greece.

Konda said, "Mediterranean food is rather new to Waukesha, so we're taking baby steps to introduce people to it. I give samples so people can taste the food. The most popular item so far is the Mediterranean Grilled Chicken Flatbread."

The restaurant held its grand opening Aug. 28 after a soft opening in June.

The menu

Dishes range from small and large plates to salads, soups, burgers and sandwiches. Mediterranean influences are evident in Italian Herb Veal Milanese, Kalamaki and a grilled flank steak and hummus flatbread sandwich topped with chimichurri and feta.

In an unusual touch, calamari is available hot as a salad topping option. A vegetarian appetizer, Tricolore, features hummus, tabbouleh and tapenade, served with pita chips.

"We source as many local products as possible and get vegetables nearby at the Saturday farmers market. Eric and I go there. It reminds me of Greece," Konda said.

In October, the menu will be changed for autumn to add more Turkish and Lebanese dishes.

The background

Konda and Sifnaios have local restaurant experience. Sifnaios' family owns Christina's Restaurant and Tuscan Hall Banquet Center in Waukesha.

Konda recruited Weber from the University Club of Milwaukee; they met when Konda was a server there. Konda's wife, Alyssa, a native of Oconomowoc, is also a business owner downtown as owner of Reaching Treetops Yoga studio.

The tables

Meli offers a few tables for outdoor dining. Inside, Meli has a relaxed but stylish interior. Dress is casual. Pendant lights and suspended wooden waves decorate the full bar.

At a recent weekday lunch, bistro tables in the bar held couples and singles, while the dining room tables included a party of seven.

Parties of up to 50 can be accommodated, Konda said.

Restaurant Scout profiles Lake Country restaurants to describe ambiance, cuisine, price range and clientele. This is a destination feature rather than a food review.

Good to know

Meli

WEBSITE: www.melidowntown.com

ADDRESS: 294 W. Main St., Waukesha

PHONE: (262) 232-8175

FARE: American and Mediterranean

RESERVATIONS: Recommended

PRICES: \$4 for soup of the day, \$5 for house Rocca salad, \$10 for Mediterranean Grilled Chicken Flatbread and \$17 for Tenderloin Filet

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday brunch

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Yes

GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS: Yes

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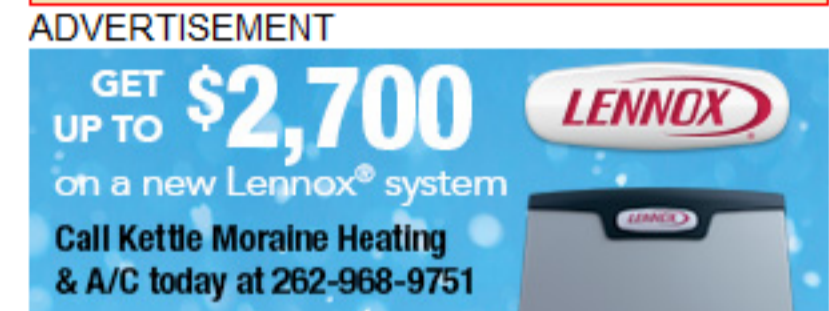
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