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November 2, 2009

Divan Turkish Kitchen: Neighborhood Fav Gets Full Liquor License, Rejiggered Menu

Posted by Marisa McClellan

Filed in: DINING



An array of dishes at Divan Turkish Kitchen (photos courtesy of B. Kessler)

In 2003, when Divan Turkish Kitchen opened up at 22nd and Carpenter, it was a neighborhood pioneer. Area residents were thrilled to have a new eatery down the block and diners came from all over Center City to check out the authentic Turkish menu.

In the intervening six years since its opening, the surrounding neighborhood has continued to evolve. Divan Turkish Kitchen founder, Ilker Ugur, seeing the changes happening around his restaurant, decided it was time to refresh Divan's image as well. He's recently resumed complete control and has gotten a full liquor license and has changed the menu to make it increasingly authentic to the foods he grew up eating in Turkey.

On a recent visit, I had the opportunity to sample an array of cold salads. The mashed eggplant dip was smokey and smooth and I can't stop thinking about the dilled artichoke and bean salad. Paired with the airy bread, the mixed appetizer plate would make an ample meal on its own (perfect for the vegetarians in your party).

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Bread plate and the chicken kabob (photos by M. McClellan)

Also on our table was the chicken kabob platter, the mixed grilled vegetable platter, as well as both the meat and spinach dumplings. Everything was remarkably well cooked and seasoned, leaving us as happy a group of diners as a restaurateur could want. The only thing I'd do differently in the future would be to order the dumplings as a shared starter, as opposed to a main course. They were creamy, lightly spicy and, swimming in a creamy yogurt sauce, indulgently rich. After a few bites, I was wishing for some rice and a bit of plain veg to balance out the heft.

The desserts are also winners, particularly the generous portions of baklava (one order comes with four squares, which is more than enough to share) and the deep pots of housemade rice pudding.

If Divan Turkish Kitchen is on your restaurant list, consider bumping it up to the top of the list (and come hungry).

Divan Turkish Kitchen
 918 S. 22nd Street, Philadelphia, PA
 (215) 545-5790
<http://www.divanturkishkitchen.com>

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