

Culinary Confessions: Lebanese Taverna



The Lebanese Taverna's Chef's Patter offers a "Taste of Lebanon" featuring a sampling of baba ghanoush, tabouleh, hommus, lebneh, grape leaf, falafel, fatayer spinach, kibbeh and m'saka. (Tom McCarthy Jr. | CR Staff)

By Father Leo Patalinghug

My recent "Nourish Your Faith" pilgrimage featured biblical foods prepared by Christian, Jewish and Muslim chefs who promote a message of peace one meal at a time. The experience left me hungry for more foods reminiscent of the "City of Peace." I recently explored Lebanese Taverna, a chain restaurant that gives modern flair to traditional Middle Eastern flavors.

Ambiance: The chic setting, open concept, spacious bar, comfortable seating and fashionable lighting gives a big-city vibe that intentionally avoids kitschy décor. It invites newcomers to taste tradition in a clean, modern-designed space. *4 out of 5 halos*

Service: A friendly host, efficient servers and food runners willingly shared explanations with smiles and encouragement. *4 out of 5 halos*

Menu: Large variety of menu options capture cross-cultural Middle Eastern flavors. Gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options are not side dishes, but entrees - along with savory lamb, chicken, seafood and kafta. Obviously, there was no pork. Sampler platters, soups, salads and kid-friendly items reflect the heritage of healthful family meals. Saturday and Sunday offers brunch. *4 out of 5 halos*

Beverage selections: The beverage varieties, indicative of chain restaurant availability, include wines from traditional wine regions and a few Middle Eastern varieties. Happy hour and modern cocktails complement well-seasoned foods. *3.5 out of 5 halos*

Food: The authentic flavors, rooted in traditional cooking styles, are attractively presented on custom plates that are sometimes too big for small tables. Chickpea, eggplant and cauliflower get a balanced application of tahini (sesame seed paste), while proteins, vegetables and dipping oils are infused with regional sumac, za'atar, hyssop, cumin and more.

No doubt, tastes can inspire memories. It's no wonder Jesus instituted remembrance through bread, wine, bitter herbs, fish and oil. When we taste, we can see God's

goodness, and that the food of our faith is never outdated. Good food from Lebanese Taverna has done the same for traditional cuisine. *3.5 out of 5 halos*
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