

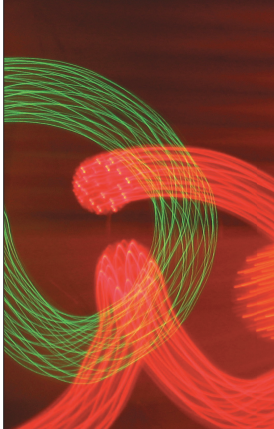
— presents ADOPT A PET

Many lives will be changed by the new President-elect, but arguably none more so than that of the new puppy he promised to acquire for his daughters in the wake of his historic victory. Make like Obama this Christmas and give your own child or significant other a new friend to love—adopt a pet. With plenty of shelters in the area, you'll have no problem finding a dog or cat to call your own. Once you've found a furry companion, head over to Lincoln Park's Barker and Meowsky (1003 W. Armitage) and set your pet up in serious style. The pocket parka, \$38, is perfect for keeping a small dog warm, and the faux fur hood is adorable. For kitties, there's the dottie bloom bed, \$79. Your cat will be comfy in this flower shaped cushion, and the cute dotted pattern will easily match a neutral or brown decor. (Nicole Briese)

ANIMAL SHELTERS

- Animal Welfare League** 6224 S. Wabash, (773)667-0088, animalwelfareleague.com
- Anti-Cruelty Society** 510 N. LaSalle, (312)644-8338, anticruelty.org
- ARF House Chicago** (773)305-1960, arfchicago.org
- Cats Are Purrsons, Too** (773)728-6336, chicagocaninerescue.org
- Chicago Canine Rescue** (312)850-1254, chicagocaninerescue.org
- City of Chicago: Animal Care and Control** 2741 S. Western, (312)747-1406, ci.chi.il.us/AnimalCareControl
- Red Door Animal Shelter** 2406 W. Lunt, (773)764-2242, reddoorshelter.org
- Animal Care and Control** 2741 S. Western, (312)744-5000
- Felines, Inc.** [Cats Only] call for appointment, (773)465-4132, felinesinc.org
- Harmony House** [Cats Only] call for appointment, (773)463-6667, hhforcats.org
- PAWS Chicago** 1997 N. Clybourn, (773)975-7297, pawschicago.org
- PuppyLove/LoveCats Pet Rescue** 1150 N. Lake Shore, #23F, (312)636-1200
- Tree House Animal Foundation** [Cats Only], 1212 W. Carmen, (773)784-5488, treehouseanimals.org
- Windy City Animal Foundation** P.O.Box 607478, Chicago, IL 60660, (773)559-5101

NEWCITY



Photography by Aiman Akhtar
www.aimananimation.com

VOL 23, NO. 1067

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NEWCITY IS PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY BY NEWCITY COMMUNICATIONS, INC., 770 NORTH HALSTED, SUITE 303, CHICAGO, IL 60642 (312)243-8786 (T) WWW.NEWCITY.COM

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NEWLY NAMED SAHARA KABOB
BOASTS PASSION AND TALENT

Back Up to Big Buns

By Michael Nagrant

I LIKE BIG BUNS AND I CANNOT LIE. Though, as with foie gras, Alderman Joe Moore apparently does not. According to a recent local story by Martha Bayne about Sahara Kabob, the artist formerly known as Big Buns and Pita restaurant, Moore asked the owners to take down their pseudo-Vegas like marquee in favor of a more "genteel" awning.

Though his suggestion was purportedly about the garishness of the sign, I have no doubt he also despised the fact that such a suggestive Sir-Mix-A-Lot-friendly name besmirches his Rogers Park empire. Then again, Moore has shown he's more interested in vilifying luxury food items than dealing with the drug dealers that still run rampant in his fiefdom, so maybe not. If he cares, then I'm sure his cheeks are still a bit chapped over the fact that the owners retained the subtitle "big buns and pita" on their new awning.

I dig the subversive nature of the Sahara folks not only in their new choice of architecture, but also for their Assyrian-tinged brand of Middle-Eastern grub. Though they have plenty of falafel and taboule, not to mention a decent Polish hotdog (who says you can't be all things to all people), there is also a handful of unique offerings.

First among them is the Lahmim Beajin, the fallout from a high-speed collision between a kabob, puff pastry and a pizza. Finely ground beef, blanketed in a rusty rich tomato sauce studded with tomato, onion, parsley and aromatic sweet and hot spices like cumin and allspice, is nestled inside a buttery patisserie-worthy crust. Sprinkle a little lemon, make like you're at Giordano's and pop a slice in your mouth.

For those who are looking for a portable space heater in the upcoming deep freeze of December, try the lentil soup featuring toothsome (i.e. not disintegrated mushy bits) beans and a rich creamy base, or the Douckua, a tart heartwarming barley, yogurt and lamb soup. If you'd rather take your comfort in solid food, the Quuzi, dripping-off-the-bone lamb shank enrobed in tomato sauce, will do nicely.

If you're an unrepentant carnivore, but in love with a vegetarian, then the hummus and shawirma plate might just be the perfect culinary peace offering for both of you (assuming your veg-friendly buddy doesn't mind spicy spit-roasted beef and lamb juices and chunks in the middle of his or her pureed chickpeas).

Unfortunately for vegetarians, the falafel plate is kind of bland. While the heft and crispy exterior is nice, I'm a sucker for the amount of cumin, parsley and coriander seasoning that turns a falafel nuclear green. Sahara's deep-fried balls sport a beige under-seasoned fava bean and chickpea mix. Though, the accompanying torshi or pickled veggies kicked up with sport peppers and a zingy cutting touch of vinegar make up for the lack of flavor.

Meat eaters, on the other hand, have a Ted-Nugent-hunting-trip's worth of animal flesh to check out, the best of which is a smoky charcoal-grilled kefta kebob laced with cilantro, caramelized onion and cumin.

As compelling as the food is the fact that owner Khoshaba Khamis has a day job at the Chicago Hilton, while his wife Hala and his daughter Larsa hold down the fort at the restaurant. Like many low-key ethnic storefronts, this is a skin-of-the-teeth-margins enterprise. Witnessing an empty dining room on a weeknight, you question whether passion and talent are enough to sustain this operation. Hopefully it is.

Sahara Kabob is located at 6649 North Clark, (773)262-2000