

# The Miami Herald

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2003 | 101ST YEAR, NO. 102 | ©2003 THE MIAMI HERALD | FINAL | 35 CENTS



CHUCK FADELY/HERALD STAFF

ON LINCOLN ROAD: Antonio Ellek, CEO of Pasha's, an island of serenity.

## REVIEW

# Pasha's posh, but not pricey

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Our lunch foursome — a vegetarian, an Atkins dieter, a South Beach Diet experimentalist and a svelte, international traveler — could easily have been on a collision course with disaster, but Pasha's, a sleek Mediterranean fast-food spot on Lincoln Road, proved to be just the ticket.

If McDonald's is home to the Golden Arches and the Big Mac, Pasha's is headquarters for a soothing waterfall and tender grilled meats, fragrant basmati rice, bold bulgur (cracked wheat) and marvelous mezes, as tapas are called in Turkey and Greece.

Then there are the dynamite salads: tabbouleh (bulgur, parsley, tomatoes and scallions), *choban* (tomatoes, cucumbers, scallions, feta cheese and olives), *ades* (lentils, tomatoes, bell peppers and herbs) and *fasolia* (garbanzo, kidney and cannellini beans plus scallions). Each can be ordered small or large, drizzled with excellent extra-virgin olive oil or anointed with a vinaigrette made from it.

*Pide*, a traditional Anatolian dish, is a light version of pizza. Boat-shaped, phyllo-thin dough is filled with vegetables, cheese, meat or fish and baked in a wood-fire oven until the surface is crispy but the inside still soft and chewy.

Unlike any other fast-food emporium we've seen, Pasha's

is a temple of serenity with instrumental jazz piped in. Daylight pours in the striking pyramid-shaped windows, one wall is sponge-painted a gorgeous Aegean blue and a striking curved glass staircase leads to a quieter mezzanine level.

Still, it's a fast-food drill: You place your order at a long, sleek, stainless steel counter, receive a beeper that alerts you when your order is ready and carry it back to Scandinavian-style tables and contoured chairs.

It's odd to be eating food this good on faux-wood paper plates. The food, though, is real and a deal. Grazers have a wide selection of dips and spreads for pita bread, including hummus; *labneh*, a yogurt cheese; *muhammara*, a sensational sweet walnut confection; eggplant-based *baba ghanoush*; and an olive mix. Other mezes include zesty patties called *adje*, made from shredded zucchini, and *borek*, yummy phyllo dough fingers stuffed with herbed cheese and baked.

A half-dozen of the flatbread wraps are vegetarian, including a falafel of chickpeas, tomatoes and tahini sauce and a refreshing *hal-loumi* with cheese, mint, tomato and cucumber. Meat versions include filet mignon, chicken and *adana*, seasoned ground beef.

A filet mignon shish kebab boasts six chunks of tender

beef that are not given their due by the minuscule pieces of onion, tomato and bell peppers on top. On the side: more-than-generous portions of hearty bulgur or fragrant basmati rice, with choice of yogurt-based *tatziki* sauce; aioli, a garlicky mayo; or *harissa*, a spunky Tunisian salsa.

A Turkish proverb advises people to speak sweetly and eat sweetly. Both are easy to do at Pasha's. *Apelino*, an apple pastry, is baked fresh daily. There's also chocolate mousse and cake plus *nido*, a concoction of shredded wheat and almonds, and *milate*, a creamy milk pudding with pistachio topping.

We washed our meal down with fresh-squeezed lemonade with fresh mint. You can also get O.J., hot chocolate, various coffees and chai, mint or black tea.

■ Place: Pasha's.

■ Address: 900 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach; also 3801 N. Miami Ave., Miami.

■ Rating: Very Good.

■ Contact: 305-673-3720.

■ Hours: 11 a.m.-midnight Sunday-Thursday, till 1 a.m. Friday, Saturday. (Open today.)

■ Prices: wraps, sides and salads \$2.50-\$4.95, entrees \$5.95-\$9.45, desserts \$2.95-\$3.25.

■ FYI: Soft drinks only. Credit cards: AX, MC, VS.



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Pasha's may be fast food, but it's fabulous fast food in a temple of serenity.