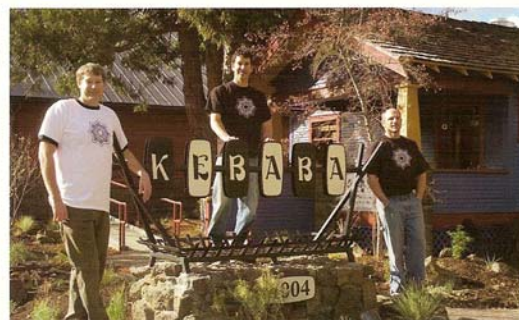
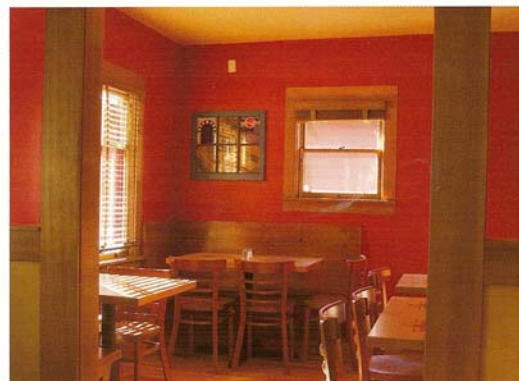


Kebaba



A Taste of the Middle East

Right in the heart of Newport Avenue's vibrant retail district sits one of Bend's newest and most unusual restaurants. Kebaba opened in October, bringing to Central Oregon the new ethnic dining experience known as Modern Middle Eastern.

"We thought the term 'Modern Middle Eastern' was a good representation of what we're trying to

"Middle Eastern food is all about community eating."

do, which is to bring to Bend some traditional Middle Eastern food, but with more of a modern palate," explains Eric Leyden, who is the owner and operator of Kebaba, in partnership with Pizza Mondo owners John Picarazzi and Steve Koch.

Leyden certainly is the man to do just that. He learned about Middle Eastern food from his family, some of whom are Moroccan and Israeli, and by working in restaurants specializing in Persian, Iraqi, Afghani and North African cuisine. He ascertained a lot of what he calls the "basics" from working with a Jordanian chef.

The food may be new to Bend, but the location isn't. The craftsman-style house, with seating inside for 30, has been through several restaurant incarnations over the years. The establishment's latest personality includes new paint, extensive landscaping and new patios, all intended to create Leyden's vision—a comfortable, casual dining experience that highlights the essence of Middle Eastern food.

"Middle Eastern food is all about community eating," Leyden explains.

The menu, featuring Leyden's own recipes, certainly reflects that. Mezzas, which really are a meal for two, include fresh pita, hummus, babaganouj (puree of eggplant, tahini, olive oil and lemon), taboule, manakeesh (kind of like Lebanese pizza) and either falafel or two kebabs. "Mezzas, especially at dinner, are something to sit and savor, while having a nice conversation," says Leyden.

The Mezzas go for just \$15-\$17.50, reflecting another of Leyden's goals—affordability. "Instead of \$40 for two people for dinner, it's going to be more like \$20 for dinner for two people, which is becoming a rarity in Bend," says Leyden.

Start out your meal with an assortment of appetizers, like Mixed-peppercorn Sear'd Haloumi cheese or Karnabeet (deep-fried cauliflower), priced from \$3-\$4.25. Then move on to Rolled Chicken, Lamb, or Yellowfin Pita sandwiches, \$5-\$6.50. Kebabs come with rice pilaf and salad for \$9-\$12.50. Or try Curried Tempeh, with celery, scallions, raisins and cashews in a curry apricot dressing; just five bucks. A large fatoush salad with a lemony dressing is priced at only \$6.25.

You'll always find Stella beer on tap, along with other beers, wine and limited cocktails. Many menu items are available ready-to-go in their cold case. Trust the staff to guide you through unfamiliar territory so you'll experience an enjoyable Middle Eastern meal, at an affordable price.

"I want to be known for doing really good food at a fair price and in a comfortable environment," says Leyden. "If that's what I'm known for with my first restaurant, then that's all I can really hope for."

Kebaba is located at 1004 NW Newport Avenue in Bend and is open daily for lunch and dinner. For more information call 318-6224.