

# Pop-up business offering Mideast cuisine in Joseph

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH —Wallowa County has an “Euzumeh” to dine on authentic Middle Eastern fare for the next month and a half at the Gold Room in Joseph.

An Euzumeh is Arabic for an invitation, particularly to a dinner party, according to chef Tamara Hattar, who is doing the “pop-up” with the cuisine she learned from her Jordanian-born parents and brought to Joseph beginning Dec. 1. The pop-up is what she does to offer her service on a temporary basis.

“I don’t have my own ‘brick-and-mortar’ restaurant, so I go into another restaurant — like the Gold Room,” Hattar said. “I was also doing it in Portland and I run a service or a dinner for the evening or, in this case, I’m doing it for two months.”

Hattar is babysitting the Gold Room while the owners take care of their new daughter, who was born in October.

“They’re my good friends, Jo Marie Pitino and Ross Effinger,” Hattar said. “That’s why I’m doing this for December and January to give them some more time with the baby, and this is a great opportunity, as well.”

## Born and bred to cook

Hattar, who was born in California, grew up in a restaurant run by her father and cooking alongside him. Although she doesn’t consider herself fully fluent in Arabic, she can understand it when her parents speak it to her and speak back — to a degree.

“My family is from Jordan and I was raised in the kitchen with my mom, aunts and grandma just cooking all the time,” she said. “I’m first-generation



Talia Galvin/Talia Jean Photography

**Tamara Hattar prepares a dish at the Gold Room in Joseph where she’s offering Middle Eastern cuisine through January as part of a “pop-up” called Euzumeh.**

(American). I was raised around cooking. I did go to culinary school in San Francisco.”

But despite her credentials from a culinary school that she attended after college — when she also worked in restaurants as a server — it’s the on-the-ground — better yet, over-the-stove — experience as tutored by her parents.

“I grew up in the restaur-

ant business. Professionally, I’ve been working in restaurants since 2010,” she said. “I think a lot of the skills and experience just comes from working in restaurants, just cooking and getting good experience.”

## Arab cuisine

A quick look at the menu will baffle most who are not familiar with

Arab cuisine. While there are familiar items like kale, hummus and roasted pepper and feta dip, less familiar items have names like Labneh with Za’atar, Sfeeha and Ful Mudammas.

But don’t be intimidated. Not only does Hattar know what she’s doing, she’s schooled her staff in the intricacies of the menu.

“That’s also the exciting part of bringing this to the county is I know it’s all pretty unfamiliar to the majority of people here,” she said. “But with the servers, we did have a meeting and I printed out a glossary of terms and they’re well versed with the menu and can explain it to the guests.”

Also, there’s a brief description under each item on the menu.

There also are items many will find familiar. “We have kebabs and all

the dips and pita bread and falafel,” she said. “I also make some pickles, which seem to be very popular.”

## Local produce, meat

Hattar said she doesn’t import her food all the way from Jordan.

“I try to do seasonal (dishes) and see what we can get from the farms. One of the major farms is Hayshaker in Walla Walla (Washington),” she said. “They’re incredible, and we’re so lucky to get produce from them.”

But she also obtains food from Wallowa County farms, as well as Evergreen Family Farm in La Grande.

“We work with Prairie Creek Farm in Joseph and Little Hill near Lostine and we work with local ranches, so 6 Ranch and Carman Ranch,” she said. “We try to source from local farms and ranches as much as we can.”

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