

Try wood-fired Mideast cuisine at Gold Room



By Bill Bradshaw

Joseph eatery offers Arab food through January

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, said 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.”

In fact, tonight, Wednesday, Dec. 22, the Gold Room is bringing back its signature pizza for one night.

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.



Tamara Hattar displays an array of Middle Eastern dishes she’s offering in December and January at the Gold Room in Joseph. It’s part of a “pop-up” called Euzumeh.

“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 cooked 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 (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 restaurant 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 excit-

EUZUMEH

What: Arab cuisine

Where: The Gold Room, 100 N. Main St., Joseph

When: Today 1 p.m. for pizza; 4-8 p.m. Thursdays-Sundays (except Christmas Eve and Christmas) through January

Phone: 415-378-1624

Email: euzumeh@gmail.com

ing 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 Ever-

green Family Farms 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.”

After January?

Once Hattar closes her pop-up at the end of January, she’ll return to Portland where she still keeps an apartment. She may return during tourist season to help Ross and Jo Marie. But her summer plans are still tentative.

“I’m still undecided. I do love it here,” she said. “I definitely fell in love with the town, but I haven’t decided if I’m going to come back yet.”

Effinger said he’s been glad to have Hattar do her pop-up and give the county a bit more variety. He said they met while working together at a restaurant in Portland.

“It’s the best. Wish we had more options in the county,” he said. “We wouldn’t know how to do it if we didn’t have her.”

In March, the Gold Room will bring back its signature pizza cooked in a wood-fired oven.

“Pizza will be back in March,” Effinger hollered across the restaurant.

Bill Bradshaw is a reporter for the Wallowa County Chieftain. Have a business tip? Contact him at 541-398-5503 or bbradshaw@wallowa.com.



& Skylight Gallery

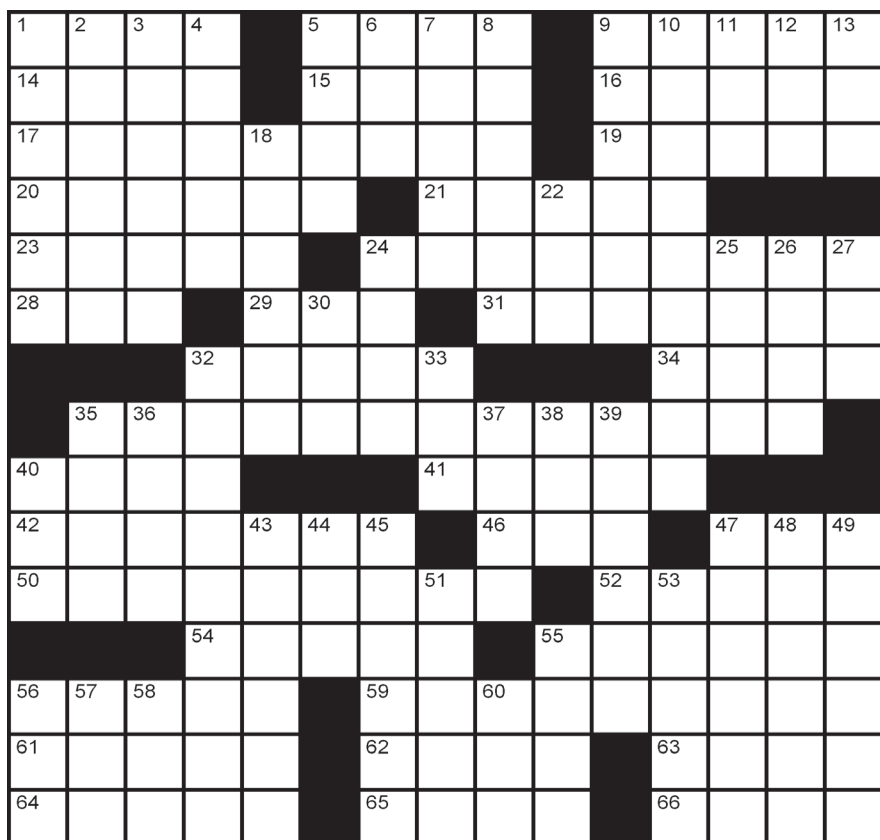
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CLUES ACROSS

1. Achy
5. Dot on a radar screen
9. Asparagus unit
14. “You said it!”
15. Practice designed to center the mind
16. ___ Kitty (toon with a hair bow)
17. **“Goodnight, Irene” singer (Note: The first words of the starred clues’ answers form a sequence)
19. Bothered
20. Some supporters of the LGBTQ+ community
21. Gross smells
23. Fourth Greek letter
24. *Websites’ waiting periods
28. Extremely dirty room
29. ___ tai
31. Polite affirmative
32. Defective car
34. Soft food
35. *Dish featuring Yorkshire pudding and sausages
40. Beer ingredient
41. Skeletor’s foe
42. Skilled speakers
46. Wheel groove
47. Droop
50. **“Was I right or was I right?!”
52. Escape the attention of
54. MLB player whose mascot is an alien
55. 2004 Will Smith sci-fi flick
56. Elbow or shoulder, e.g.
59. *Kindergartners’ rewards
61. Two tablespoons
62. Abbr. that shortens a list
63. Word before “farm” or “house”
64. One may pop a wheelie
65. “Auld Lang ___”
66. Forcibly remove

CLUES DOWN

1. They get dressed in the kitchen
2. Eggy breakfast
3. “Are you serious?”
4. Call off a relationship



5. Tournament exemptions
6. Texter’s guffaw
7. Frozen abode
8. What an employee looks forward to
9. Garments often required for service
10. Fruit used as a Japanese New Year decoration
11. Utah’s state animal
12. Drink in a pint glass
13. Reel’s partner
18. Grinned widely
22. Lyrical poem
24. Mane attraction at the zoo?
25. Injure using claws, perhaps
26. Simplicity
27. “Unbelievable,” in a text
30. French pal
32. Inevitable conclusion to a wedding reception
33. To the ___ degree
35. Fatty sashimi option
36. “Uncut Gems” gem
37. Courageous type
38. Bird on Australia’s coat of arms
39. Unpleasant critics
40. Spicy
43. Pearl producer
44. Total nonsense
45. Intensifies suddenly
47. Forester automaker
48. Loves a bunch
49. “On your mark” follower
51. Like unclean chimneys
53. Numbers game
55. Not doing anything
56. Bank heist, say
57. French homophone of “we”
58. Squid’s defense
60. PC connection



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