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Before opening Barrio, Draheim owned Soupçon food truck. He initially offered soup, then added sandwiches and salads. Formally trained at Western Culinary Institute, he has worked at fine-dining restaurants. His experience is evident in Barrio and now in the menu at Shimshon.

The inspiration for Shimshon came from a trip to Israel in 2017 when Draheim and his wife, Amy, visited her family. Amy spent some of her childhood in Israel and has fond memories of the food her grandmother used to make. Steven was intrigued by the spices, flavors and food they found at the shouk (market), where Amy's 80-year-old grandmother still shops.

When the Draheims looked to start a new food truck during the pandemic, a food cart serving Israeli food is what came to mind. Amy has been advising on the menu to keep it authentic, but the true test will be when Amy's father returns to Bend.

It's the first I've tried Israeli street food, but the exotic flavor profile certainly appears to be loyal to the region. Although there are several Mediterranean food options in Central Oregon, Shimshon is different from others influenced by Greek, Italian or Lebanese cuisine.

The secret is in the sauces. Draheim told me that it's his favorite aspect of Israeli street food. Many of the individual dishes are made with a sauce as the base. Other items, like the bowls, give you the option of choosing which sauce to add.

Instructions are posted on how to order to make it easier to create a bowl: start with a Kebab, choose two sauces, then add flatbread or Za'atar fries. The food cart workers are glad to offer advice about which sauce is the best complement to different meats and sandwiches.

I had the mezza sampler. The baba ganoush was the best I'd ever tasted. It starts with mesquite charcoal smoked eggplant and is mixed with a garlic sauce at its base, then topped with pistachios and feta cheese. Draheim explained that it is a long process to create this excellent dip. It's a treat as part of the sampler.

Another component of the sampler was green olives with Marcona almonds and a slice of orange. All are delicately coated in olive oil and garlic. I could easily become addicted. The Moroccan carrot cubes with mint had a distinct flavor. Carrot cubes are tossed in amba sauce made with cumin, sumac, turmeric, mustard seed and fenugreek. Perhaps the fenugreek gives it the taste of Israel. Fenugreek is an herb, often called hil-



Shimshon offers a mezza sampler with several choices. This one has cauliflower, carrots, olives, baba ganoush, hummus and a lamb kebab.

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beh, used in cooking during Rosh Hoshana, the Jewish New Year. It has a slight curry-like flavor. It's a party for your tastebuds when it is all combined with the mint on the carrots.

Also included was fried cauliflower with nutty tahina sauce. Tahina sauce is made with Tahini sesame seeds and lemon that adds a sour bite. The florets were well-cooked, firm, not raw. It seems it would be a hard balance to cook them perfectly on a food truck. I chose the nutty Za'atar sprin-

kled fries. As the sampler had baba ganoush and hummus, I might have been happier had I selected the flatbread for dipping.

Shimshon's hummus is smooth with a gentle combination of flavors. Garlic, lemon juice, salt and cumin are added to the chickpeas and tahina. Sometimes a taste, like the lemon or garlic will dominate hummus, but this was a smooth blend.

I finished my sampler with a lamb kebab. Kebabs are cooked, and falafels are fried when you buy your meal. It adds to the fresh

#### Details

Midtown Yacht Club food truck pod  
1661 NE 4th St, Bend, OR 97701  
[midtownyachtclub.com](http://midtownyachtclub.com)

flavor of each of the dishes.

I also ordered the stuffed pita with falafel. It was one of the best falafel pitas that I've eaten. The gluten-free falafels are made from a classic recipe to which more herbs and serrano chiles are added. The falafel balls were piled into a pita pocket with a green Israeli salad, hummus, feta, fries and a generous drizzle of tahina and amba sauces. Draheim pickles the vegetables for the sandwich at the Barrio restaurant, where he also uses them in Cubano sandwiches.

The vegetables cut through the creamy sauces and falafels. Amy would prefer that he use Jerusalem pickles, but they have yet to find a source they like. The pita was a terrific balance of savory, nutty, citrusy, spicy and freshness.

Next week, I'll finish exploring new high-quality food trucks with Chef Chris Leyden's Feast Food Co.

■ Reporter: [barb@barbgonzalezphotography.com](mailto:barb@barbgonzalezphotography.com)