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Two New Lamorinda Businesses are Keeping Things All in the Family

By Sophie Braccini



The Erez family in their new restaurant; from left, Roy, Karin, Mikki, Vivian, with younger son Michael in front Photo Sophie Braccini

dishes of all colors, aromas and textures. Everything was fresh, delicious and tasted homemade. The tahini was smooth and delicate, scooped with just baked pita bread; the hummus had more texture and was flavorful; the dolmas were mouthwatering; the falafels crunchy on the outside and tender inside; the salads were crisp, with herbs adding flavor. The meats - kababs and shawarmas - were not served that day. But according to Vivian Erez, the meat dishes are the specialties that will set them apart because she gets her spices directly from Israel. "We are serving something unique here," she says, with the confidence of a professional cook. The meat dishes are served as entrees or sandwiches, and include chicken, lamb, mergez and seafood versions.

Open until midnight several nights a week and close to the New Rheem Theatre, Shish Kabab Show is poised to change the Rheem Center. At the back of the restaurant stands a lonely microphone on a small stage. Is that for the 'Show'? "We have a few surprises coming up!" replied Erez.

Zahra Boutique Salon

3578 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette

284-3031,

www.zahraboutiquesalon.com

When she was 21-years-old and mother of a three-year-old daughter named Shila, Zahra Pasti decided to flee the Iranian Islamic revolution and landed in Denmark. After 30 years of travel and hard work, Shila Dorrani-Unal and her mother Zahra just opened a new shop in Lafayette, Zahra Boutique Salon, across the street from Postino on Mount Diablo Boulevard. The concept is total beauty, from hair, to skin, to clothing; even some vintage objects for the home.

Zahra remained in Denmark for many years, where she enjoyed peace after the turmoil she had witnessed. But one of her five sisters moved to the Bay Area and enticed Zahra to join her. "It was a real culture shock for me," remembers Shila, who was 13 at the time. "It was nice to be reunited with some of my family," adds Zahra, "we had been very close growing up. We were always doing each other's hair and make-up, so it was natural for me to move in that direction for my career." Zahra opened a beauty salon in El Sobrante that prospered for over 15 years.

In the meantime, Shila was growing up and spending all her spare time sketching and making dresses. After high school, she studied at the Fashion Institute (FDIM) in San Francisco and worked in pattern-making and sketching.

"We've learned a lot of things together," says Zahra, "We've had many struggles and adventures, and they've made us stronger." Now they are combining the mother's long time passion and practice of hair and skin care with her daughter's professional experience

Shish Kabab Show

376 Park Street, Moraga (in the Rheem Center), 388-0351,

www.letseat.at/ShishKababShow

Mikki and Vivian Erez moved to Moraga from Orinda a year ago. They have three children, one in elementary school, one in middle school, and one in high school. And they are all working in the new family restaurant, Shish Kabab Show. "This is a family affair," says Karin, the middle daughter, "I'm really looking forward to working here; this is a great environment to be all together."

The Erez's moved to this country from their native Israel 12 years ago, leaving behind a successful restaurant and a summer camp program. Now they are getting back to doing what they love to do together - creating a restaurant, using family recipes and savoir-faire. "This is not only a restaurant, this is a place for people to come together," says Mikki Erez adding that they have kept their prices low to attract students as well.

On the day this reporter visited, the salads and vegetable dishes were being taste-tested. Tables were covered with a wide variety of

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in the fashion world.

Zahra works her magic towards the rear of the shop with hair color, make-up, facials, and the ancient method of thread facial hair removal. Shila presides over the front area, where she offers 'shabby chic' clothing that she says brings out her European side. "When people come here it is to be beautified while staying comfortable," says Shila.



Zahra (front) with daughter Shila and younger daughter Sheva (standing) who sometimes helps in the store Photo Sophie Braccini

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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