

by HOWARD FRIEDMAN

photography by MARISA CHAPPELL

With a small 30-seat dining area that is regularly populated with a hip, young crowd, Kebaba is fast becoming the neighborhood gathering place

Tahini and a Martini

Kebaba's Middle Eastern Flavors Lure a Hip Crowd to the Westside "Bab-House"

AN EXCURSION to a Middle Eastern restaurant should excite your palate with flavors of garlic, lemon, olive oil, roasted eggplant, sesame tahini, cardamom and yogurt. Kebaba, a new Middle Eastern restaurant on Newport Avenue in Bend, does not disappoint. Enter the old-world style eatery, a 1930s-built mill house, and you will see a sunset of colors, wooden tables with a silk-screened motif, inspired by the Middle East, the meeting point of Europe, Africa and Asia.

Owners Steve Koch and John Picarazzi (of Pizza Mondo), and their partner, chef

Eric Leyden, used their collective love for Middle Eastern food and a dash of consultation with a Jordanian chef from Portland to develop the menu for what they call their neighborhood gathering place.

"We wanted to not have to drive over to Portland to get Middle Eastern food, and we wanted to bring some more diversity to the culinary field here in Bend," Koch said. "One of our main goals was to bring good value and to make it accessible. We worked really hard to bring something to Bend that people could feel comfortable with."

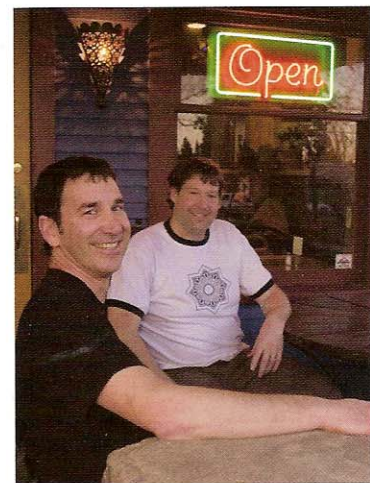
For starters, order a Kebaba pome-

granate martini and sample the expertly prepared babaganouj, a roasted eggplant, tahini and garlic spread, served with fresh-baked warm pita bread; or try the falafel, a piquant crisp-fried concoction of chickpeas and spices. Entrees of various kebabs are delectable. The tender lamb served with a spicy harissa yogurt is another divine choice. Hummous chicken schwarma is an ample portion of well-seasoned, slow-roasted chicken (traditionally cooked on a vertical broiler), served on a spread of hummous, with fresh lemon and garlic perfectly complementing the ground garbanzos and sesame puree.

There are also a number of pita sandwiches, mezzas (a meal for two), soup and salads, and a kids menu. Delicious desserts are mostly house-made, and the Turkish coffee, with beans from nearby Backporch Coffee Roasters, has an aroma of fresh-ground cardamom.

Lunch is served with counter service, and items range from a modest \$3.50 to \$6.75. Full-service dinners range from \$3.50 to \$12.50, with all foods available for a quick, easy, well-packaged take-out option.

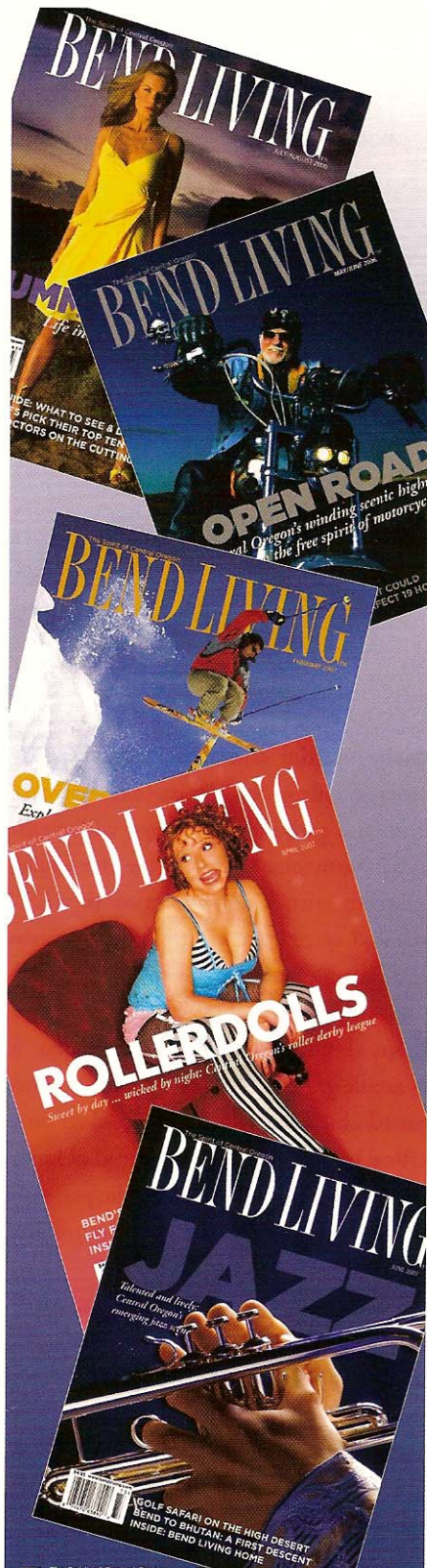
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Co-owner Steve Koch and chef Eric Leyden hanging at Kebaba.



The warm colors found inside Kebaba "feel more like the spices we use in the Middle East," said co-owner John Picarazzi.



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CULINARY: hot dish



Warm your appetite with Kebaba's fresh pita and hummous, drizzled in olive oil.

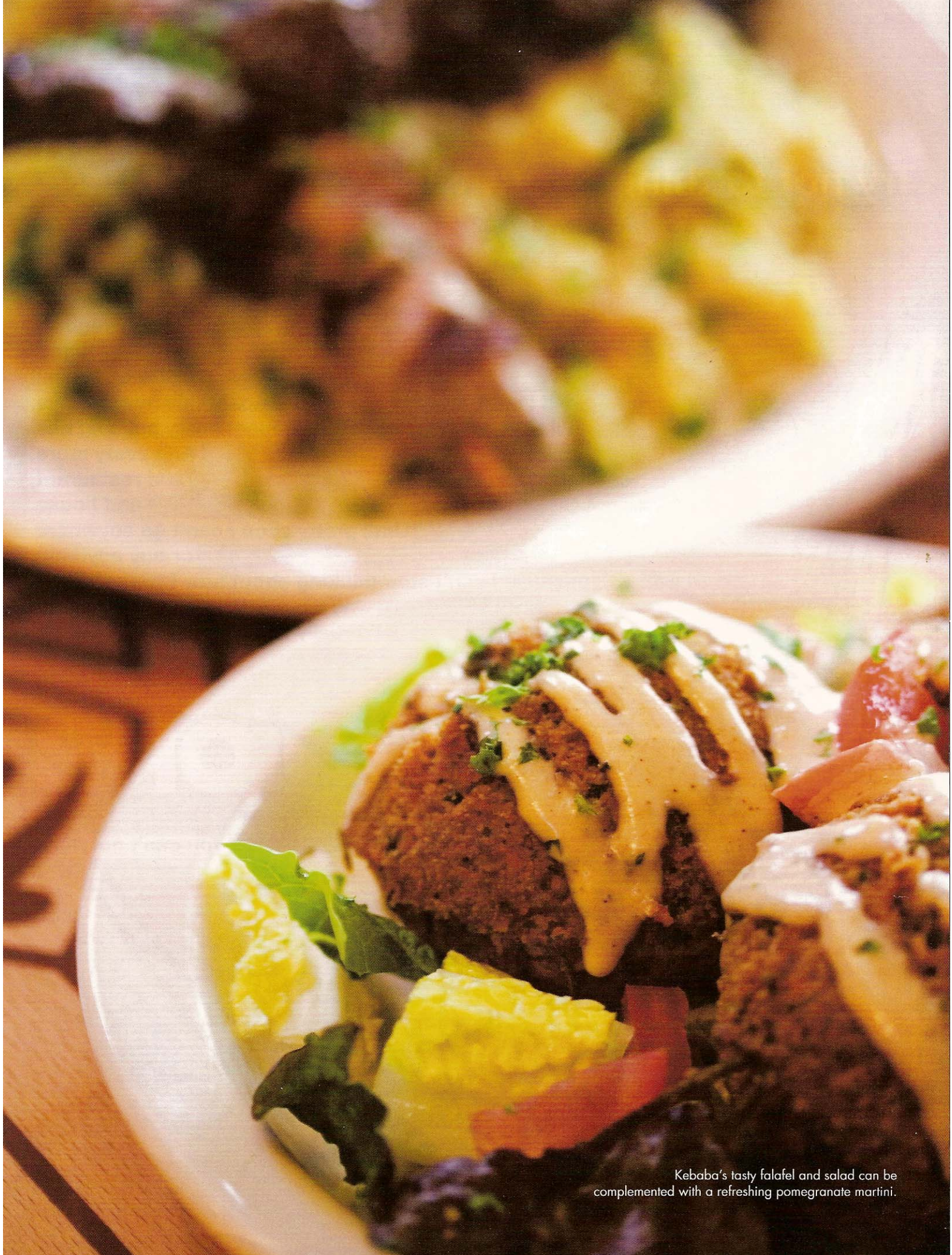
partners had hoped.

In the summer, Kebaba doubles in size, with an additional 30 seats on the outside patio and "becomes more family- and kid-friendly," Koch said.

Kebaba's proprietors used a firm grasp of a traditional core of Middle Eastern cuisine that is simple and affordable to provide an excellent value for their lunch and dinner customers. **DL**

Howard Friedman has been a Bend resident for 26 years and is a retired chef and restaurateur. He now cooks for friends and writes about dining for BEND LIVING.

INFO
 Kebaba
 1004 NW Newport Ave.
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Kebaba's tasty falafel and salad can be complemented with a refreshing pomegranate martini.