

The Holyland Experience by the Editor



Out for a Sunday Dinner, my wife was driving and I was under no illusion that I had control over where we would eat that day. Barbara was heading for North 27th Street and there was no stopping her.

"I think we should find an ethnic restaurant for lunch today. Let's just drive until we find a place that is open." Somehow an adventure seemed like fun to both of us. We had visions of Chinese, or Thai food. Maybe Mexican fair would be in the cards that day. **It is interesting to notice what I consider adventuresome these days.**

Just three blocks north of



'O' street we sighted what looked like a good possibility. We pulled into the parking lot for the **Holyland Cuisine (313 North 27th Street)** hoping it would be open on Sundays. We decided this might be fun.

It had been some time since either of us had eaten **middle-eastern food**. I wondered what flavors we'd have. **Will it be too spicy, too bland, or just right?** The die was cast when we found the door open.

At first, we were surprised to find the dining area vacant but this gave us a chance for a quick look-around. We found the seating area to be clean and nicely decorated. The area was small but clearly there was pride here.

In a few seconds, the manager appeared from the back room and showed us a nice table. He was very polite and seemed genuinely happy to see us. We like being the only customers in a small restaurant. With no distractions, we could be assured of 100% of his attention. The adventure was under way.

The experience was simply wonderful. We ordered a combo platter since we are no experts of the Holyland Cuisine's recipes. Each item was a wonderful taste treat - like a miniature buffet where only the finest fla-

vors were presented to us. The beef and chicken were seasoned to perfection. **The sambosa (eggroll), the biryani (beef and veggie mix), and the falafel (vegetable patties) all tasted great.** We practiced saying them out loud. **Fa-laa-ful, Beer-yawn-nee, sam-bow-sa** - now we were having fun!

As much as we enjoyed the food, the manager was the real treasure of this day's journey. After politely asking how the food was, he seemed to measure our interest in hearing a little more. All we had to do was ask a few questions and we soon learned about his very interesting life.

Yahya Farhan (call him Yah-hee-ah or simply Mr. Farhan) **spoke with pride of His father and grandfather** who both ran a very successful restaurant in Baghdad, Iraq. Yahia waited in that business when he was just 15 and learned many lessons. The one he uses to this day is **"Take care of the customers, and everything else will take care of itself."** To him, this is more than a thing to say. **It is a guiding principle.**

Yahia graduated with an engineering degree in Iraq, but came to the US several years ago. He drove a truck for a few years to give himself time to learn English.. Now, with strong spoken english, he has his first restaurant. With an air of promise, he already speaks about his **next restaurant.**

We have to smile



because it is easy to believe that his dreams will come true. He reminds me of my immigrant grandparents and how willing they were to work hard to make a living for their families.

Mr. Farhan keeps his restaurant open seven days a week from 11 am to 9 pm. On two visits, we have seen only him and his family at work. We are also impressed that he serves baklava created from his own recipe.

In our Holyland adventure, every aspect of the experience exceeded our expectations. We hope you will give them a try.

Check out their web site at **holylandcuisine.com** or just take on the adventure like we did. **It is fun to tell friends that you went to the Holyland for lunch.**

**Holyland Cuisine
Call 477-3636**