

So long hippies, hello yuppies at new Jungle

holiday dining events

Another Pointe in Time 5:10

Read *Cheap Eats* each week for a big, yummy, non-evaluative chunk of information about an inexpensive Valley eatery.

Name: Pita Jungle.
Where: 1949 W. Ray Road, Chandler.
Phone: 855-3232.
Hours: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
Plastic: Yes.
Reservations: Not accepted.
Type of food: Middle Eastern-influenced health food.

What to eat: Spicy Chicken Wrap (\$5.95), Grilled Portabello Mushroom Burger (\$5.25), Pesto (Pita) Pizza (\$4.95); Falafel (Pita) (\$2.95), Mediterranean Roasted Chicken (Shawarma) (\$4.55).

Atmosphere: Stylish cafe that attracts a neighborhood crowd, mostly young professionals and Pita Jungle devotees who want to drink.

Kid menu: No.
Smoke-free: Yes, but smoking is permitted on the outdoor patio.
Beverages: Beer, wine, soft drinks and divine smoothies.

Noise level: Good. The tables are spread out, and the high ceiling diffuses noise.

Description: If the original Pita Jungle in Tempe is, say, northern California hippie, then the new one in Chandler would be Marin County yuppie.

Set in the red-tile sea of new construction that is east Chandler, the offshoot of the venerable ASU-area haunt has about as much in com-

mon with its parent as college students in Tempe do with the young married couples who populate this East Valley suburb.

It's a graduation of sorts. The menu at the new location is the same — loads of Middle Eastern-influenced health food — but the feel, the *vibe* of the place is completely different.

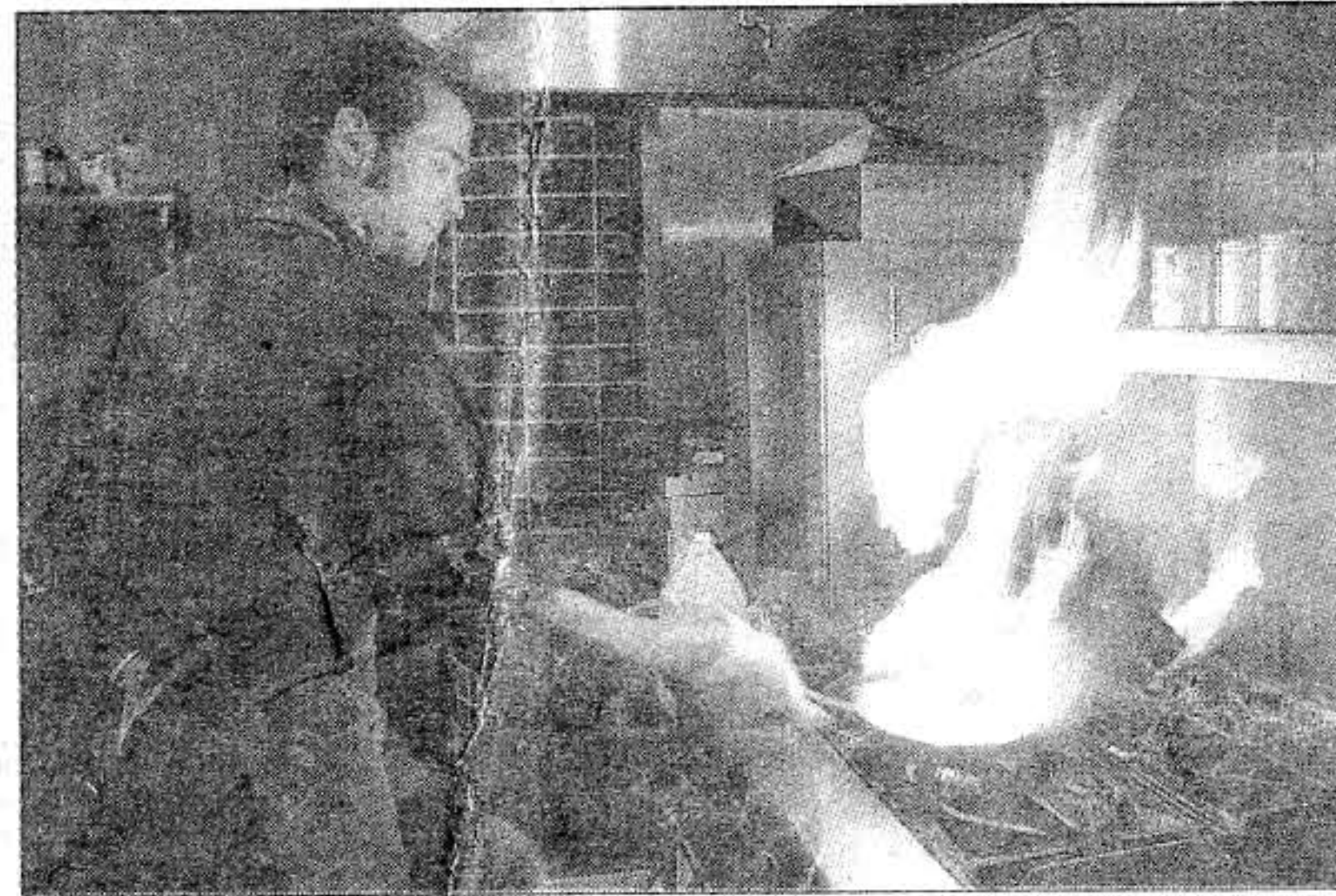
With a stylish, industrial interior set off in contrasting blues and whites, a back patio overlooking an artificial lake, even candles on the tables, the new Pita Jungle offers a romantic, classy setting.

There's even a full bar, which would be unimaginable in the cozy, granola-flavored Tempe location.

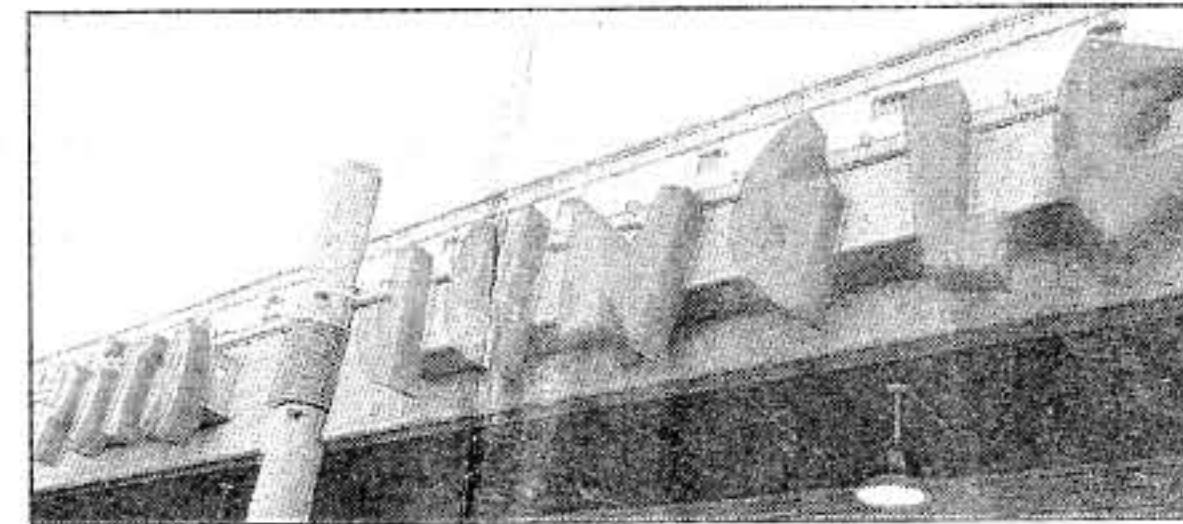
Menu highlights such as the Grilled Portabello Mushroom Burger also make it a place you'd want to go. A thick, juicy mushroom top arrives cooked in a tangy marinade and garnished with spring greens, tomato and onions. It doesn't come with a side, and depending on your appetite, it might leave you wanting more.

That's when it's nice to share someone else's wrap. Two tasty versions at Pita Jungle are the Spicy Chicken Wrap and the Veggie Garden Wrap (\$5.25).

Both entrees come with brown rice wrapped in flatbread, but the spicy chicken mixes in beans, zucchini, roasted peppers, onions and large pieces of roasted chicken that are just spicy enough. The vegetable wrap is a motley of cauliflower, zucchini, broccoli, eggplant, tomatoes and mixed beans that tastes fresh and zingy.



Photos by Paul F. Gero/The Arizona Republic



The Chandler Pita Jungle has a new attitude to match its suburban clientele, but the Mideastern-inspired menu remains the same. Manning the stove is Seth Ellis.

During our first visit to Chandler, a band of Pita Jungle veterans and I walked in the door to encounter a stylish young lady who handed us the familiar brown recycled-paper menus.

Just as if we were at the Tempe location, we milled around deciding what to order at the cashier's counter. When we told the waitress, she looked at us for a second and said, "You could've sat down and or-

dered, you know."

Wow. Pita Jungle, we hardly knew ye.

— David Proffitt

To have your restaurant considered for Cheap Eats, please submit a menu and other pertinent info by e-mail to pjc@mega.net, by fax to 253-3734, or by snail mail to: Penelope Corcoran, Restaurant Columnist, The Arizona Republic, P.O. Box 2245 NF-19, Phoenix, AZ 85002.