

# Pita Jungle

By Micah Cohen



Photo by Avolio International

**T**he artwork on the walls of the new Pita Jungle is almost as colorful and exotic as the menu.

Opened mere weeks ago by ASU graduates Fouad Khodr, Nelly Kohsok and Bassel Osmani, Pita Jungle is already making a name for itself as a hip, healthy place to eat in the wilds of Tempe.

"This is a restaurant that tries to answer the concerns of people in the '90s," explains Bassel Osmani, who came to Tempe via France over ten years ago. "We also try to answer the needs of vegetarians, with almost 80 percent of our menu having no meat."

The menu of fresh, made-to-order selections is huge, and hangs over the service counter like suspended sculpture. Start your day at Pita Jungle with a simple Basic Pita of three scrambled eggs and tomato slices in a hot pita, complimented by a tall, freshly squeezed glass of seasonal fruit or vegetable juice, or freshly ground organic House Blend coffee. Or opt for the exotic Ratatouille Omelette, stuffed with sauteed eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, green peppers, and onions.

Salads and hot or cold pita sandwiches make great light, but filling, lunches. Pick them up, or call Pita Jungle for delivery to your office. Go for the Grilled Vegetable Salad, tossed with citrus dressing; Hot Mediterranean Roasted Chicken Pita (Shawarma) which features chicken freshly broiled on a vertical rotisserie, marinated with garlic and

lemon; cool, freshly prepared hummus and tabouleh salads can be found stuffed in a pita, too.

Pita Jungle's menu is rounded out by Nut and Tempeh (soy bean) burgers, pita wedges, and an assortment of dips that make great appetizers, and side order specialties like lentils with rice and browned onions, and feta cheese-filled Tyrropita. On the walls, under colored lighting and stylish exposed ductwork, which turns the ordinary storefront into a romantic bazaar,

hangs the work of local artists. "The purpose is two-fold," explains

Osmani. "Support for local art, since we've all lived here for a long time, and we would like to support the local scene; and, too, it gives us good decorations on the walls! We don't take money from the sales; the artist's names and numbers are on the wall."

Fouad, Nelly and Bassel got the idea for Pita Jungle after travelling to couture hubs like Miami and Los Angeles. "We wanted to provide a hip environment, so we checked out hip places, and we got a lot of great little ideas," says Bassel.

Come for the art, come for the food. "We're serving something natural, and healthy, and very tasty," Bassel says invitingly.

Pita Jungle, "the art of healthy eating," is located at 1250 East Apache, between McClintock and Rural. Call 804-0234 or fax 804-0230 for take-out or delivery.

