

# Eating Out

## Restaurant Reviews by two hungry guys

When it comes to selecting a really good restaurant in the Valley, some would say it's a jungle out there. We heartily agree. A **Pita Jungle**.

This Jungle is located near the heart of Tempe, convenient to Phoenix, Mesa and Scottsdale. Perhaps on the very dot that signifies the population center of the entire metropolitan area!

Pita Jungle is a casual, health-oriented, Middle East-influenced, art gallery-decorated, bustling restaurant that has location, location, location. So do the dozens of neighboring restaurants. What separates the Jungle from the jungle? Cuisine, cuisine, cuisine!

Take its Spinach Pasta Salad (\$4.75), for instance. I could (and often do), any day of the week. What sounds like a simple combination of fresh spinach leaves, chopped tomatoes and green peppers, sliced button mushrooms and, of course, pasta—in this case, green and white fusilli—becomes a symphony of flavors with the addition of its own lemony vinaigrette. Portions (of this, and most everything else) are more than ample.

Before we get too far ahead of ourselves, however, we need to discuss the overall

philosophy of the food you'll find at Pita Jungle. Philosophy of food, you ask? Let us explain.

If you are a meat and potatoes kind-of-eater, Pita Jungle may not be the place for you. On the other hand, if you are looking to spread your



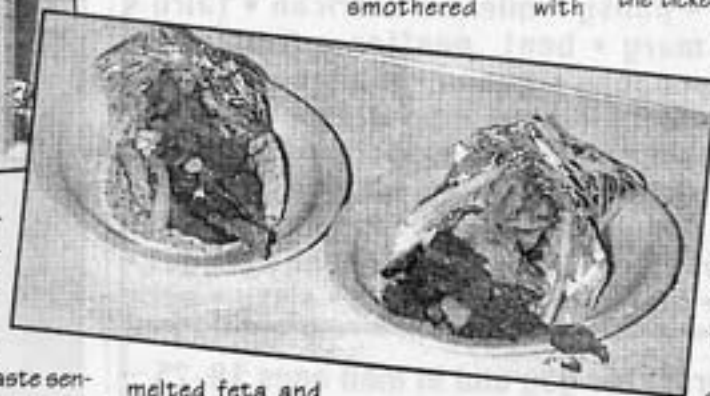
culinary horizons—without spreading your middle—this place is perfect. It's all about macrobiotics and the "art of eating healthy." The art being that herbs and spices make this food taste sensational. This, you will find, is Pita Jungle's motto. And they live up to that expectation.

Vegetarian is more the fare. Those who still crave meat, however, will be pleased to find several chicken and albacore tuna dishes worth trying.

The Jungle offers scores of pitas in about every variety. Pita pizzas, hot pita sandwiches, pita wraps, cold pitas, pita et ceteras. About the only pita thing not served is a pita pita pizza.

One of our all time favorites is the Spicy Chicken Pita Wrap, a bursting-with-flavor polygamous marriage of roasted fowl, rice, beans and grilled veggies. Terrific!

Herbs and spices (\$3.95) might be a funny name for a pizza, but this one is worth exploring as an ideal appetizer or light entree. A crisp dinnerplate-sized disk is smothered with



melted feta and Swiss cheeses atop spinach, tomato and mushroom slices, crowned with a generous sprinkling of chopped fresh, fragrant thyme, basil and oregano leaves

Also on the menu are burgers healthy enough to make a cow happy. (Hint, hint: no beef.) The Black Bean Burger patty (like all

three veggie burgers) comes on 12-grain bread and is topped with a mix of tomatoes, cucumbers and sprouts. Of the versions listed, this one tasted richer than the Veggie Burger, which is condimented with your choice of Dijon mustard or tahini dressing. The Tempeh Burger (a soybean patty with sprouts tomato lettuce and a tahini dressing), was a close second, though.

Everything mentioned so far could be considered more of a lunch fare. For dinner, and those who want more on their plate, Pita Jungle's combination platters are just the ticket.

It's hard to imagine some beans, rice, and fresh grilled vegetables accompanied with tofu and seitan (a vegetarian sausage) would make for a feast, but Pita Jungle piles this delicious combination high on its handsome custom-painted pottery Macro Platter (\$5.95). You won't leave this place hungry!

The Mediterranean Platter (\$5.95) also is enough to make sure these two queens eat like royalty. A variety of finely crafted traditional Middle Eastern tidbits includes samplings of: vegetarian dolmades (stuffed grape leaves); cold, marinated fresh green beans; chunks of tangy feta and briny Greek black olives;

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