

Q&A: Co-Founders of Pita Jungle

Written by Elizabeth Liberatore

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Ever wondered what brains are behind the scrumptious Mediterranean-styled wraps and salads at Pita Jungle? Co-Founders Bassel Osmani, Nelly Kohsok and Fouad Khodr gave up their traditional jobs to create a restaurant inspired by fresh and healthy foods. Osmani, Kohsok and Khodr collaborated to produce a jungle that beats the safari any day...



AFM: *What is Pita Jungle's key to success?*

PJ: In a nutshell we attribute our success to providing a superior quality product consisting of freshly made foods, in generous portions, at the lowest price sustainable for the running of our operation. The fact that we chose to express our culinary aptitude through the Mediterranean diet, in an artsy cool environment that evolves from location to location helps too...

AFM: *What are some future plans for Pita Jungle?*

PJ: Pita Jungle is looking to grow if we can stay true to our concept; that is to produce excellent food, provide an excellent service in restaurants that change in look from location to location by embracing the time and place, so to provide a customized feel of each restaurant to its respective community.

AFM: *What are your personal favorite menu items?*

PJ: personal favs-Hummus, taboule, mahi mahi with pita chips, chipotle chicken pizza, chicken shawarma, lentil fetoosh salad...it actually goes in cycles, I find myself ordering the same thing for a few weeks, then I switch to something else, only to revisit the original favorites after an extended period of time...

AFM: *What made you decide to open a Mediterranean-inspired restaurant?*

PJ: Several reasons why. First of all, the Mediterranean Sea is a special place to all three founders/owners, since it highlights our places of origin, South France and Lebanon. Second, in addition to excellent taste and textures, the Mediterranean diet has proven to provide countless health benefits. Third, with its focus on low red meat, high veggie, grain and fruit, it is a diet that is very sustainable, from an ecological perspective. Overall it is just delicious! The Mediterranean diet had inspired our cooking before we even thought of opening our first restaurant; it is what we like to do, and where our passion lays. Even though you may find items on our menu that are not of Mediterranean origin, we made sure at the very least and as much as possible, to follow the principles of the Mediterranean diet, as pertains to low fatty meats, veggies, fruits, olive oil etc.

AFM: *Are there any family recipes of yours that are served at Pita Jungle?*

PJ: Several. Hummus, falafel, grape leaves, taboule among others.... having gone to college in the USA and away from our families, part of the adjustment process was to reproduce the foods we loved and so over the years, through letters or telephone conversations with family, recipes were exchanged...and used!

AFM: *Who has been your biggest support system throughout the process of opening a restaurant?*

PJ: I would have to say our customers. From day one, on a cool November day back in 1994, our customers embraced us and provided us with the best support any business could wish for: repeat visits and positive word of mouth. For that and for being able to fulfill our passion for food, we are infinitely grateful.

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