

A TASTE of Greece

**Mo Hunter-Shine and Rishma Patel
take off from the bustle of the town
to enjoy a Greek treat**

MEZE-MEZE

On a rather drab weekday evening, my colleague Rishma and I took a short journey to Lancing to visit Greek restaurant Meze Meze. We were pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to find, just off the main lower coast road in South Street, and with parking available close by - that makes a pleasant change, when parking can sometimes be a nightmare.

Meze Meze sparkles in the evening light, with lovely blue lights cascading from the windows. It seems to say: "Please come in for a warm welcome, and some delicious food." We entered, and found it to be true! Loula, the owner, took over the premises three years ago and she and her husband set about transforming it into the stylish restaurant it is today. Spacious, but with an intimate atmosphere, it feels warm and welcoming whether or not there are many people dining. Many places don't feel alive until they are fairly full, but this is not the case with Meze Meze.

We sat at a comfortable table in the front part of the restaurant and Loula talked about the menu. It is an exciting choice with many dishes that are familiar Greek standards, such as moussaka and kleftiko, charcoal grills, kebabs, and fish dishes. We decided on the meze, a popular way to share small bites of several dishes, and a good way of sampling as much as possible! There are three meze varieties to choose from, meat, fish and vegetarian. Indeed, Loula is keen to ensure that there is plenty of choice for vegetarians, vegans, and those with coeliacs - so much of the food is gluten-free, and is indicated on the menu; A welcome change from many restaurants, where the veggie option is just an afterthought, and those who cannot eat gluten are often not catered for.

To start we had a selection of delicious homemade dips; houmous, taramosalata and tzatziki, with delicious pitta bread. We are now familiar



with many of these dips, which are available in supermarkets, but there is nothing to compare with the fresh and vital homemade taste. The lovely fish flavour of taramosalata, the course texture of houmous - made with chick peas, garlic and tahini, and the cool cucumber and mint taste of tzatziki. We also sampled some superb dolmades (rolled vine leaves, packed with herby rice), which were probably the best I've tasted, here or in Greece! There was also haloumi, a distinctive Greek cheese, and some delicious spicy chick peas. Meats included lounza - tender char grilled pork loin, kleftiko - slow roasted lamb, afrelia - pan fried pork, and divine chicken kebabs - kotopoulo. My favourite was the kleftiko, the wonderful tender and full flavoured lamb. Of course the dishes are accompanied by a sumptuous Greek salad complete with olives and Feta cheese. The dishes came along in three stages, which leaves time to enjoy each course without being overwhelmed by the choice, and to eat at a good pace. A totally delicious and exciting meal.

While we were eating, more people came to dine, and Loula took the time to talk to everyone about their meal. She certainly makes everyone feel at home. The service is excellent, with Loula and waitress Anna making sure all runs smoothly.

We did not venture to try the desserts as we were rather full, but I wish we had! Offerings included the wonderful baklava, and rizogalo - Greek style rice pudding - in my opinion, the best way to eat it. Maybe next time! Occasionally there is live music at Meze Meze, in the form of the bouzouki of course! This is an ideal venue for a party, and for any form of celebration. (No plate smashing any more, though, Health and Safety!) For a refreshing and different way to enjoy an evening out for a meal, I would certainly recommend a visit to Meze Meze. Chef Kostas is from Crete, and Loula is a Greek Cypriot, and they will certainly make sure you are greeted with the best Greek hospitality and food. It's just a short journey from the bustle of the big towns, close to Worthing, Shoreham and Brighton, and well worth the short journey.

Take a look at the excellent website, and sign up for the newsletter, which contains news of special events, recipes etc.

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