

BY ELISE BERNARD

Though we have yet to fully shake off the shackles of winter, March generally marks a turning point where one's thoughts turn to spring. The cabin fever gives way to excitement over outdoor patios and farmers markets.

Shawafel Comes to H Street

I recently chatted with Alberto Sissi, who plans to open Shawafel, a restaurant serving shwarmas and falafel, at 1322 H Street NE. Sissi first moved to DC in 1996. He has spent the past couple of years in Paris seeing to the four locations of his restaurant Rimal, which operates on a model similar to the one he plans to employ at Shawafel. Shawafel will feature a hip and modern interior with seating for about 25 patrons, and a simple menu of shwarma, falafel, tabouli, fattoush, french fries, and a few other items. 8" sandwiches will run from about \$6 to \$7.50, with a shwarma bowl offering coming in closer to \$8. The average patron who orders fries, a sandwich, and a drink, can expect to pay around \$11.

Those seeking cheap (and frankly not that healthy) thrills can test drive the french fry sandwich (Sissi maintains that this is the only one in town). The sandwich (\$5) is filled with a garlic yogurt spread, wild cucumber pickles, lettuce, tomato, and plenty of french fries. Diners will order at the counter, but take a seat while their food is brought to their table. Shawafel will be open for lunch and dinner everyday, and on Thursday-Saturday will keep late hours, likely remaining



Erik Bruner-Yang of Toki Underground serves drinks at the Pug.

open until 3:30 a.m. Sissi's first visit to the H Street Corridor came just six months ago, following the recommendation of his realtor. He immediately loved the location. In relating the story he explained "I don't want to be in Georgetown. I don't want to be in Dupont. I don't want to be anywhere else." He feels that the H Street Corridor is hip and up and coming, offering the closest thing you'll find in DC to a New York City late night feel.

H Street Cares Raises Money For Brainfood

In partnership with Deals for Deeds (<http://dealsfordeeds.com/>, a sort of Living Social, or Groupon with a social conscience) a number of H Street NE establishments offered voucher purchasers significant discounts on food and drink during a week long fundraiser. 15% of all sales went directly to Brainfood (<http://brain-food.org/>), a local non-

profit that seeks to teach valuable life skills to youth while using food and food preparation as a self-empowerment tool. The benefit sprang from the mind of local culinary celebrity (and chef at Dr. Granville's, 1238 H Street NE, <http://www.granville-moores.com/>) Teddy Folkman. Folkman is a longtime volunteer chef with Brainfood. The efforts of all involved paid off big time. The original goal was to raise \$1,800 during the week. They met that within 24 hours. At the end of the week they raised \$5,080 for the nonprofit.

Khan's Mongolian Bar-B-Q Prepares to Open

Khan's Mongolian Bar-B-Q (1125 H Street NE) is ever so close to serving up delicious, and affordable, bowls of steaming beef and vegetables. The casual restaurant is sleek and modern on the inside. High tops and booths

line the walls. Its proximity to the bars in the 1200 block promise hungry late night crowds. Recent weeks have seen the restaurant hiring full staff for both front and back of the house. Expect an early spring opening.

Toki Underground Draws Closer to Opening

Recently posted employment ads created some chatter because they signaled that the long awaited Toki Underground (second floor of 1234 H Street NE, <http://tokiunderground.com>) is almost ready to open. Toki Underground is a dumpling and ramen bar set to open above the Pug (1234 H Street NE, <http://thepugdc.com>). Not only will Toki serve up traditional style ramen and dumplings, but I'm told it will handle the food for the Pug. Are pho dogs really in Pug owner Tony Tomeldon's near future? Only time will tell, but the odds look good.

Atlas Performing Arts Center Names a New Director

The Atlas Performing Arts Center (1333 H Street NE, <http://www.atlasarts.org/>), a major arts anchor along the H Street NE Corridor, recently named Sam Sweet as its Executive Director. Sweet is no newcomer to the Atlas, having served as a management consultant, and the Interim Executive Director there during the past year. Sweet replaces Patrick Stewart, who returned to San Diego to pursue his interests with an arts organization located there.

Prior to joining the Atlas team, Sweet served as a managing director



Sam Sweet, new Executive Director at Atlas Performing Arts Center


for the Shakespeare and Signature Theaters, and also worked for the Corcoran. He expressed enthusiasm for his new position, saying “[i]t is truly an exciting time for the Atlas.” And adding that “[t]he Atlas is a state-of-the-art venue that is energizing the community artistically and economically with its range of programs. [Jane Lang’s] vision in the Atlas was to put people –artists, audience members, neighbors –at the center of its mission.” Stop by and visit the Atlas during the Intersections (<http://intersectionsdc.org>) interactive arts festival that runs through March 13th.

From Pop-Up Tacos to a Restaurant?

Tacos Impala (1204 H Street NE), a temporary taco stand from Toki Underground partners Erik Bruner-Yang and Troy Hickman, has generated plenty of press and street buzz in recent months. Though the tacos will give way to the cheese steaks of Philadelphia Water Ice (1204 H Street NE, <http://www.philawaterice.com/>) at the end of March, this might not be your last chance to sample Hickman’s Mexican fare. He recently announced that he is shopping spaces on H Street with an eye to opening a full service Mexican restaurant.



For more on what’s abuzz on the H Street Corridor you check out my blog at <http://frozentropics.blogspot.com>. ★

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