

A tale of two missions at Café B'Alma

• By DEBBIE LAMPERT
eLuna.com

Café B'Alma is a coffee shop with two missions. The first mission is to provide good food in a pleasant atmosphere. The second mission is a lot nobler.

Café B'Alma offers a full menu of classic coffee shop fare plus some exotic dishes. Late risers will be pleased to note that the very extensive breakfast menu is served all day.

There are small starters like focaccia and soup, and different types of shakshuka. Sandwiches and toasts come with a small salad, but if salad is your thing, there is a long list of salads as main dishes. Pizza and pastas are also available, one quiche, stir-fried Asian vegetables and vegetarian mushrooms shwarma.

In short, you can eat at B'Alma every day for a month and never repeat the same dish.

Say the word and the café will make you a vegan version of just about any item on the full menu. But just to make it easier, Café B'Alma has a separate menu of pure vegan dishes.

On our visit to Café B'Alma, we chose two of the more exotic dishes: Khachapuri from the Georgian kitchen (NIS 56) and the Mexican quesadilla filled with mushrooms (NIS 56). Both dishes were very satisfying and needed no encore.

We are always willing to have a sweet send-off, so we indulged in one of Café B'Alma's excellent desserts. Our dessert was baked to order and took a few minutes to prepare, but it was worth the wait. The warm cake is served with a scoop of ice cream, making it a nice combination of hot and cold (NIS 46).

We wondered about the origin of the name B'Alma. We are Jews, so we have a difference of opinion. Some say that the name comes from the Spanish word meaning "soul." But I think it comes from the Aramaic for "world," which speaks to the second



mission of this restaurant.

Café B'Alma was established as a venue for integrating people with mental disabilities into the working world. The café is a large-scale rehabilitation project run by the Public Health Association together with the Services for the Disabled of the National Insurance Institute. The restaurant staff is made up of workers in the rehabilitation program and workers who are not. They work side by side in the kitchen, waiting customers and performing all the various restaurant functions.

Our waiter at the café was pleasant and gentlemanly. He was attentive and efficient, and definitely earned his tip.

As a longtime eLuna.com restaurant reviewer, I must say bravo to anyone who can hold their cool in a restaurant. A restaurant is the mother of all high-pressure environments. Everyone is hungry. Everyone is waiting. Customers can be rude and demanding. If you can keep

it together in a restaurant, you can work anywhere. In my book, if you have survived a restaurant, rehabilitation complete.

Café B'Alma is the corner restaurant at the entrance to Petah Tikva's Yachin Center. Parking is free of charge in a large parking lot in the middle of the center. The restaurant has indoor seating, seating on a glass-enclosed patio and outdoor seating. There is plenty of room for everyone.

Café B'Alma
Yachin Center, Petah Tikva
Tel: (03) 904-0727

Open Sunday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday, 8:30 a.m.-noon. Saturday, one hour after Shabbat-11 p.m. Closed Shabbat.

Kashrut: Rabbanut
The writer, the founder and CEO of eLuna.com, the premier English-language website for kosher restaurants in Israel, was a guest of the restaurant.

Notice to our readers

The Voice of music listings for next week were unavailable.