

Iraq 'shipudia' meets Herzliya Hills

• By DEBBIE LAMPERT
/eLuna.com

Herzliya Hills is a spiffy new upmarket center for nightlife entertainment in the Sharon area. The center houses an ever-increasing number of restaurants and shops, but the stand-out restaurant is Shifra & Jamil. This is a beautiful, modern, meat restaurant with service such as we have not seen in a long time. Just completing its first year, Shifra & Jamil is already an award-winning "steakiya," counted among the best of its kind in the country.

Its story begins in the 1960s when Saba Jamil and Savta Shifra opened the shwarma shop that was to become a Herzliya landmark. They brought the flavors of their native Iraq and their warm hospitality to their business, making their shwarma shop a beloved location. Eventually, grandson Liroi joined the family business, where he was schooled in food preparation and in the culture of hospitality.

Liroi has brought all of this to the new Shifra & Jamil restaurant: not just the flavors of the Iraqi kitchen, but also the down-home friendly atmosphere of the original eatery. Every customer at Shifra & Jamil gets a warm personal welcome from Liroi himself—every guest is made to feel important. The attentive but not overbearing staff is well trained and efficient.

The meal format is classic steakiya. It starts with big, round lafa bread—served hot from the taboun oven—and a tableful of 15 salads. These are all authentic Iraqi specialty salads.

"What do you call this green salad?"

"Tabouli."

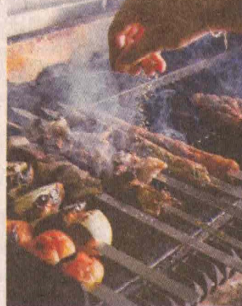
"This is no tabouli that I know. This one has nuts and grains and delicious flavors."

"You've gotta try this one! I can't tell if it is carrots, or what?"

Shredded grilled sweet potato, we think, sprinkled with sesame seeds in a light sweet sauce.

Liroi does not have to tell us that all the salads are made in-house. You cannot buy these salads off the shelf any place I've been.

(Shifra & Jamil)



Maybe in Iraq.

Shifra & Jamil is primarily a meat restaurant with a large variety of grilled meats. For non-meat-eaters there is chopped Israeli salad and a generous portion of felafel balls, served in a bowl. While felafel is a potential hazard to us Ashkenazim with bland palates, it turns out that Iraqi food is not spicy: I finally found a felafel that goes down without a burn.

What is a steakiya without shwarma? On the grill at the entrance are two huge spits of shwarma (turkey and calf). You can order shwarma at the table or you can have it the traditional way, in a pita to go. The restaurant does a brisk street trade in shwarma and other meats for both pick-up and takeaway.

The most popular items on the menu are the *shipudim* (meat on skewers). There are skewers of *pargit* (dark chicken meat) and of two kinds of kebabs (ground meat); Turkish skewers and Iraqi skewers flavored with sharp pepper and ethnic spices. There are shipudim of chicken wings, chicken hearts-and-livers, or just vegetarian skewers with onions and tomatoes. In deference to the restaurant's heritage, my meat-eating companion chose the Iraqi kebab and the pargit, reliable favorites. The shipudim were both tasty and juicy.

Now let's get serious. Follow the menu down the page and see the selection of premium meats. These are 300-gr platters of premium-cut aged steaks. Sounds

expensive. Here's the twist. The 15 salads that you will nibble on while you peruse the menu are charged at NIS 30 per person if you order a main course, and at NIS 50 if you don't. Plates of shwarma and schnitzel come in at NIS 80. Skewers are about NIS 40 each. The 300-gr platters of aged premium beef are priced at NIS 200.

We enjoyed the great food in the beautifully designed modern restaurant with comfortable spacing between tables—and areas sectioned with dividers giving the restaurant an intimate feeling. You won't feel the size, but Shifra & Jamil can seat up to 300 people. In addition to the indoor seating, there is outdoor seating wrapped around the patio. This is an ideal venue for parties, with surprisingly reasonable fixed-price menus.

If I have one criticism of this restaurant it is that the tables, of standard size, are too small for the huge amount of food they accommodate.

The deals: A business lunch is served until 3 p.m. daily. It includes the salads and Shifra's schnitzel or two skewers for under NIS 100 per person. A premium meat lunch comes in at NIS 120. Schnitzel and fries for kids is NIS 52.

An English-language menu is available, and there is plenty of parking in an underground lot. (Note to those with food sensitivities: This restaurant uses gluten, nuts, eggs, and more.)

Shifra & Jamil
1 Arik Einstein Street
Herzliya Hills
Tel: 079-611-1999

Open: Sun.–Thu., 11:30 am–midnight. Saturday night after Shabbat–midnight. Closed: Friday and Shabbat.

Kashrut: Rabbanut Herzliya Mehadrin products. (Meat is glatt kosher)

The writer was a guest of the restaurant.

She is the founder and CEO of eLuna.com the premier English-language website for kosher restaurants in Israel.

out & about

highlights

dining

radio

movies

television

11