

As Seen In

# HOME NEWS TRIBUNE

## Evelyn's Restaurant & Bar

"After this enjoyable meal, I'm hoping my next visit comes quickly."

In New Brunswick, Lebanese cuisine  
as bright and fresh as summer

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What makes summer foods so great are the bright flavors of fresh ingredients that are at their peak during these warm-weather months. And similar fresh, bright flavors are the hallmarks of the foods of Lebanon, foods like those you can get at Evelyn's Restaurant and Bar on Easton Avenue in New Brunswick.

For a moderately-priced restaurant, Evelyn's gives you a lot for your money, including a thorough exposure to a great cuisine and a comfortable atmosphere. Its interior, renovated in 2004, is laid out in warm, muted tiles and colors that give the room an inviting feeling. Its bar is on the small size, but its 10 or so seats seem just the right size for this storefront restaurant. During the summer, the dining room brightens and opens somewhat thanks to a much-bigger-than-expected rear courtyard that features shady trees and umbrella-shaded tables. I ate inside on the recent Thursday evening of my visit, but the outside looked so inviting that I sat as close to it as I could. The food pairs nicely with these warm-weather, summery touches.

Lebanese food, like much of the food of the Middle East, lavishes diners with bright flavors like citrus and herbs. It's also very healthy. Olive oil is the fat of choice, with animal-based fats rarely being used. (The most notable exception is in baklava, in which butter is pretty liberally applied to layers of phyllo dough.) Fruits and vegetables, garlic, breads, fresh seafood, chicken and lamb are typical ingredients of Lebanese cooking, as well as beans like the chickpeas that form the basis of hummus.

Our dinner started with a few appetizers, which are pretty inexpensive, generally hovering around \$5 for servings that at times can feed two comfortably. The Hummus (\$5) is a good example. This dipping sauce of ground chickpeas, garlic, lemon juice and olive oil is served on a small plate with a dusting of

paprika for color.

Falafel (\$5) is typically a mixture of more ground chickpeas, herbs and spices that has been formed into balls and deep-fried. Evelyn's kitchen does a nice job at reproducing this Middle-eastern favorite, which it serves over a small bed of fresh salad greens and a side of tahini. (A sandwich version of the falafel and a few other entree items is also available.) The slightly flattened balls were fried crispy but not at all greasy, and the bright, nutty flavors of the sauce rounded out the depth of the chickpeas.

We also enjoyed Grape Leaves (\$4.50), a Mediterranean treat that wraps a mixture of seasoned ground beef, rice, onion and spices in marinated leaves from grape vines. The plate of six, served with a yogurt sauce, were a little skimpily stuffed and heavily dosed with lemon. The latter probably bothered me more; I'm probably complaining about the amount of filling because, except for the citric tartness, I thought these were pretty good and wanted more.

The Fish of the Day (\$16) was tilapia, here served with a tomato-based mixture of vegetables served as a chunky sauce over a good-sized, well-cooked filet of this flaky fish. I liked it, but I liked my Shawarma (\$14) even better. If you've ever had a gyro, shawarma is basically that yogurt-marinated meat that is shaved from a slowly-spinning rotisserie for the sandwich. The meat can be anything — goat, beef, lamb, chicken — though here it's beef that has been heavily seasoned with spices and more lemon, producing a tangy, reasonably tender dish of meat strips served with rice and tahini. If you're not a fan of marinated beef, the infusive flavor of the lemon may be a bit much. But in the context of Middle-eastern cuisine, the flavors are bright and interesting.

There was only one dessert — Baklava (\$2 per piece) — available on the evening of my visit. Served as two pieces about the size of two big fat cigarettes, this version of the classic phyllo-and-honey dessert was acceptable, though a little light on the gooey honey and buttery

flakiness that sets the best versions apart.

Our server was personable and efficient, and service on this not-very-busy evening was very fast. We never felt rushed, but our starters came out almost as fast as we ordered them, and our entrees arrived almost as quickly as our appetizers were cleared. I'm fine with that. After this enjoyable meal, I'm hoping my next visit comes quickly.

### EVELYN'S RESTAURANT AND BAR

"Voted Healthiest  
Restaurant by the Home  
News"

5 Easton Ave. New Brunswick  
(732) 246-8792

[www.evelynsrestaurant.com](http://www.evelynsrestaurant.com)

Hours: 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.  
Mondays through Sundays.

Appetizers: \$4.50 to \$7. Soup  
of the day: \$3.50. Entrees: \$10  
to \$16. Sandwiches: \$4.50 to \$5.

V, MC, Am Ex, Disc. Bar service.  
No smoking. Wheelchair  
accessible.