

Boustan continues to expand while serve up mouthwatering authentic Middle Eastern cuisine

MtlRestoRap

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Since 1986 Restaurant Boustan has been serving up the exotic flavors of the Middle East and Mediterranean in Montreal. Before he became Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau was known to drop by the downtown Crescent Street location. So did his late father.

Boustan has been in a steady expansion mode in recent years, with 40 locations and counting. Ottawa and Toronto franchises have come on board. By the time 2022 draws to a close that number will grow to an astonishing 60. That will include Cornwall and New Brunswick.

As for Ottawa, the Rideau Street location is a short walk from Parliament Hill and unless he came incognito, the franchisee is still anxiously waiting for the Prime Minister to come by. They will happily make a delivery to his family at Rideau Cottage.



CEO and President Emad Saad has plans for expansion in Canada and the US



Emad Saad is the CEO and President of the Boustan group. He originally came on board as a potential franchisee and by 2017 was at the helm. There were only four locations at that time, including the iconic downtown spot.

"My vision for Boustan is to create a major chain across Canada and the United States over the next 10 to 20 years," Saad told me in an interview. Boustan franchises are likely to surface as soon as 2023 in multiple other locations across Canada and the United States.

Boustan is known for its mouth-watering chicken pita, deliciously seasoned beef shawarma and kebabs and a wide array of vegetarian specials. I dropped by the NDG location on Sherbrooke Street West with a friend recently. Manager Ian Davis described the menu, which was nicely displayed.

I opted for the beef shawarma – marinated beef, served with rice, garlic potatoes, coleslaw, sauces, some pita on the side, a quenching Cott cherry cola and a cookie; my friend chose a shawarma mix of chicken and beef in pita with garlic potatoes and a baklava.

Some of the other items you can enjoy include: a fat-touch salad; hummus, chickpea purée served with pita; tabouleh, parsley and bulgur salad with diced tomatoes, onions, and citrus dressing; fried eggplant slices; egg omelet; Lebanese beef croquettes; falafel and vegetarian platters; a healthy plate of marinated chicken, served with your choice of salad; Lebanese club sandwich served with rice, potatoes, coleslaw and sauces; and more.

When Saad told me that they have added a new lentil and squash soup, I headed to Boustan on Queen Mary Road for lunch and sampled it. Wow, was it good!

Folks, I must confess that I had not been to a Boustan



A selection of some of the Boustan favorites.

location before this and now it has been transformed into a "go-to" spot. The food is fantastic!

Last fall Boustan introduced a brand-new kid's menu. Three options are available: Je Rest Saj (chicken, beef or falafel, Club Kafta or She-warman). All dishes are accompanied with fries, a juice as well as an allergen-free cookie from Délicouki and priced at only \$5.99. They come in a recyclable box, with a design representing some Lebanese cuisine food. Kids can colour following their meal.

Boustan Marketing Director Joseph Audi says to look for some appetizing new menu announcements in June. There is already a central kitchen and a goal of continually introducing more healthy options.

While you can sit and eat at all the locations, pickup and delivery has grown extremely strong during the pandemic. They also cater.

You can go to <https://boustan.ca> for all the information you need.

Follow Mike Cohen's restaurant adventures at www.MtlRestoRap.com. He can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca

Mike's RestoNotes: New QR code ordering app being launched here as pilot project

By Mike Cohen

Following the recent full reopening of restaurants and bars to full capacity and with crowds increasing, one issue remains: labour shortages. Some Montreal restaurant owners needed to cut back on their opening hours, while others have faced challenges to be able to open their terraces as spring arrives. Since the beginning of the pandemic, 85,000 workers have left the restaurant industry in Quebec.

To make life easier for restaurant owners, Sunday, the technological solution that allows you to pay your bill from your smartphone, has launched QR code ordering. This unique solution now allows customers to place their order themselves and pay their bill from their smartphone in less than 10 seconds, right from their table.

For customers, the benefits of this solution are simple: no more waiting at the counter or at your table to request a new round of beer, and the luxury of being able to sit back and enjoy the moment 100 percent on the spot. Pilot projects are being launched across Canada at a few key high-traffic restaurants, including Yokato yokabai on Drolet Street and Mae Sri on

Milton in Montreal, with more locations are to come this summer.

After seeing the success of the QR code payment feature, many restaurants have expressed a desire to take this solution further with the QR code ordering option. The people behind Sunday have listened to this strong industry demand which will be implemented in the coming months. Last fall, Sunday acquired CHK PLZ, the Montreal-based startup offering online ordering, delivery and electronic menu services. Go to www.sundayapp.com

OTTAWA TIP OF THE MONTH: From my Ottawa files, let me recommend Shinka Sushi Bar, located on Laurier Avenue West near Elgin. It has been around since 2004. When the COVID-19 pandemic, it pivoted exclusively to take-out and delivery. Their clientele responded in strong numbers, so they have stuck to this format. A second location will open later this year at a location to be determined. This was the first time in many years when we got to enjoy our sushi dinner omakase-style. The phrase *omakase*, literally means "I leave it up to you," and it is most commonly used at Japanese restaurants where the customer leaves it up to the chef to select and serve seasonal specialties.



A sampling from Shinka

A big thanks to Shinka owner chef Peo "John" Diep for making such a superb selection. Everything came neatly packaged, with a personalized description of the omakase selection on glossy paper. We started out with some appetizers and the large box of sushi was a thing of beauty, with such a nice mixture. Log on to <https://www.shinkasushibar.com/menu>