

Growing Rock'n Deli chain expands beyond Montreal

MtlRestoRap

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In 1992 Vicky Arghiri and Ihab Kolta were a newly married couple working for competing companies, Bell Mobility and Rogers. That did not sit well with their superiors and they were let go. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

Family members encouraged them to start their own business. So, when they learned that a small restaurant called *Deli Connaisseur* at Alexis Nihon Plaza was for sale they took the leap into an entirely new venture.

"There were long days of work," Vicky recalls. "I was 19 and Ihab 21. We'd go from 11 am to sometimes midnight. It was great location at the time, with all of the activity at the old Forum across the street."

Two years later the couple purchased a Ben Ash location at Carrefour Laval and soon changed the name



The smoked meat club sandwich

to Rock'n Deli and added a real "New York deli" vibe. They ended up closing at Alexis Nihon, but in 2015 the business reached another level when three franchises opened in the Quebec City area. Since that time, locales in Gatineau, St. Bruno, Toronto, Vaughan, Mississauga, Fairview Pointe Claire, Vaudreuil, Mascouche and Terrebonne followed. In 2023 they hope to debut at the Mirabel Factory Outlets, Town of Mount Royal and possibly Barrie, Ontario.

On my way back from Ottawa recently I enjoyed my first experience at a Rock'n Deli, stopping at the Les Avenues Vaudreuil plaza location. This is a standalone restaurant, with plenty of parking and indoor seating. It is situated in a former Subway location, and opened in October 2021. The franchisee is Ayman Benjamin, who runs the operation with his wife Raymondo. It was such a convenient spot as right next door was an M&M Food Market and a Mondou - two places I actually needed to get things from. A Costco is also just across the lot. This is a counter-top restaurant, but certainly does not have any fast food feel to it.

The smoked meat at Rock'n Deli is Halal certified and I can give it a big thumbs up. I took the opportunity to make a few orders. This allowed me to do a tasting on site and pack up the rest for a great lunch and dinner the following day.

I opted for the smoked meat club, which also included salami, lettuce, tomato and mustard. This was a real treat, with the bread toasted just right. It came with their crispy homemade lasso fries. I also ordered the roast beef bacon and Swiss cheese sandwich, also containing peppers, mushrooms and caramelized onions, and the three piece fried chicken combo. The roast beef was great for lunch at the office. I just heated it up in the microwave. As for the chicken, a few minutes in the air fryer at home and the necessary crispiness returned.

Some Rock'n Deli locations open for breakfast from 8am to 11am, serving eggs, omelets, bagels, French



Vicky Arghiri and Ihab Kolta, with their daughter Laura

toast, clubs and wraps. Of course smoked meat plays a nice option in the selections and these meals come with homemade potatoes, a choice of meat, toast and coffee.

Other popular menu items include 10 inch submarine sandwiches, a variety of wraps, poutines, pogos, beef and chicken burgers, salads and eight different choices of milkshakes. I failed to read the fine print that they offer lactose free ice cream options, so indeed that is something to remember for my next visit.

For more details log on to www.rockndeli.com/

Follow Mike Cohen's dining adventures at www.MtlRestoRap.com. He can be reached at info@mike-cohen.ca

Mike's Rest Notes: Pullman Wine Bar; Petros Taverna expands to Lachine

By Mike Cohen

Located at the corner of Avenue du Parc and Sherbrooke Street, Pullman is essentially devoted to the sinful pleasures of wine. It is noted for varieties of cheese, charcuteries or small plates, in a relaxed atmosphere and a decor combining sophistication with a hint of eccentricity. Doors open during the later hours of the afternoon and close at the very end of the evening, welcoming guests for an aperitif among friends or a gourmet tasting.

Audacious and well-traveled, there is a selection of more than 400 wines. Dishes are presented in small portions that lend themselves to sharing, while complementing selected wines. The sommeliers offer their expert opinion in pairing entries.

Every server at Pullman is in fact a sommelier, which comes in handy when wondering which bubbly would best suit your palate and your plate chosen from the tasty grazing menu.



The bison burgers at Pullman

I made my first visit there recently during MT-LàTABLE. I started off with a nice glass of rosé wine. For what they call "a snack," I chose cheddar and bacon gougères, a French classic that consists of baked savory choux pastry buns seasoned with cheddar and bacon. Just delicious. I was presented with a generous portion of six and they did not stay on my plate for long.

Looking at the entrées, the mini bison burgers caught my attention. They were topped with cheddar and accompanied by matchstick fries. A small portion indeed, but following my snack and with dessert still on the way I had no complaints. Bison is not something I see on many menus, and it was delicious.

Then came dessert and I chose the brownie, with cherries and mascarpone. Oh this was so decadent, I enjoyed every single morsel. What a treat!

Pullman is located at 3424 du Parc avenue. Info: www.pullman-mtl.com

Petros Taverna: Lifelong restaurateur Ted Dranias continues to expand his Petros Taverna brand, with his fifth location now open in Lachine at 600 Saint Joseph Boulevard. The others are in Westmount, Griffintown, Laurier Avenue in the Mile End and Little Italy. In the fall of 2021 he opened Scarpetta on Dante, also in Little Italy. Within the next few months, the first US-based location will open its doors at La Mer Condominium in Hallandale Beach, Florida.



Ted Dranias with son Gennaro and partner Max Terriault

In Lachine, the kitchen is being overseen by two long-time chefs from Estiatorio Milos: Dey Piklo spent 16 years at the Avenue du Parc location in Montreal's Mile End; while Stergios Karagianakis most recently worked at the New York City locale. The location, which formerly housed La Strada, has been extensively renovated. It can seat 190 people with a VIP room and a seasonal terrasse facing the river with the capacity for 100 people. The restaurant will be open every night except Monday, from 5 pm to 11 pm. For reservations call 514-538-1211. There is also free parking in a lot next door. Max Terriault, who owned La Strada, is now a partner with Dranias at Petros Lachine. Info: www.restaurantpetros.ca