

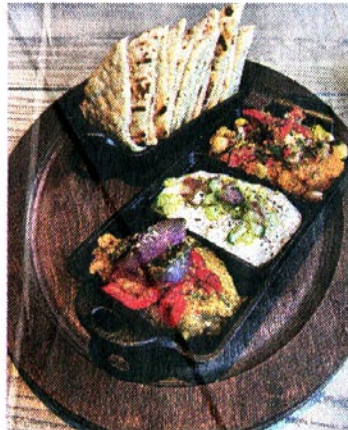
LUNCHBOX | MP Taverna

Culinary Twist Hits Greek-Heavy Astoria

Restaurateur and chef Michael Psilakis has opened up his version of a Greek taverna in Astoria, a neighborhood on the foodie map due to its traditional Greek fare. But MP Taverna doesn't serve up the typical lemon potatoes. Instead, Mr. Psilakis fuses many different influences, including Italian and Mediterranean; he describes his food as Greek American.

Mr. Psilakis said the goal of MP Taverna is to bridge the gap between his mother's ethnic Greek cooking and his experiences in the U.S. He said he hopes someday Greek food will be one of the handful of choices Americans pick regularly for food, among Italian, American and Asian cuisine.

From the menu, purchase the



meatballs in tomato sauce, which are perfectly seasoned with a distinct olive flavor (\$8.50). All three dips for the warm pita appetizer—yogurt, chick pea, eggplant—are great, so choose the



Byron Smith for The Wall Street Journal (?)

Above: the lamb shank at MP Taverna. Left, the dip combination.

combination (\$12).

For lunch, there are various salad and sandwich options, such as souvlaki, but if you're in need of something with more heft, the stuffed cheese dumplings feature a unique and delicious mix of spicy lamb sausage, pine nuts, sun-dried tomatoes, spinach and feta (\$15).

The lamb shank with orzo, root vegetables and lamb jus also comes highly recommended (\$23).

To top it all off, the galaktoboureko crême brulee is a

sweet treat topped with fruit (\$7). Another highlight of MP Taverna is its extensive drinks menu. The sandman cocktail is a light and sweet mix of Spring 44 honey vodka, chamomile syrup, lemon juice and St. Germain (\$11).

—Willa Plank

MP Taverna, 31-29 Ditmars Blvd. at 33rd Street; lunch is served Monday to Friday between noon and 3 p.m.; 718-777-2187.