



A taste of the flavors of the MEDITERRANEAN

To speak of Mediterranean cooking, one has to sample the fare of the culinary regions surrounding it—north African (especially Morocco), eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey), and southern European (Italy, France, Spain).

The Mediterranean's bounty, nurtured by the gentle climate, is reflected in the culinary feast throughout the region. Onions, garlic, and tomatoes, surrounded by olive oil, begin many dishes. Vegetables abound, as do various greens, lettuces, legumes and beans which give rich color to Mediterranean cuisine; and fresh herbs its character.

Seafood remains at the core of the Mediterranean cooking heritage. All manner of shellfish as are various white-fleshed fish erupt magnificently from soups, stews, and pastas. Lamb, goats, sheep, pork, rabbit, and fowl, provide most of the meat. Sheep and goats give forth dairy for rich yogurts and cheeses. Flavors of Mediterranean cuisine are robust and clear, unfettered by complicated sauces and heavy dollops of cream and butter.

And to savor the uniquely flavorful fare of the Mediterranean, one need not embark on a tour of the region, there's Café Mediterranean.

Capturing the flavors, aroma and ambience of the Mediterranean culinary experience, Café Mediterranean started in 1994, with the very first outlet opening in the original Greenbelt Mall in Makati. Travels to the Mediterranean countries

and their love for the unique food offering of the region influenced the owners of Café Mediterranean to put up this unique restaurant concept here in the country.

"Mediterranean food is really good. But when we started, it was not that popular here and people then were not as adventurous and not as well-versed with such kind of food. We got scared at first but we just ventured on," said Marla Tañada, co-owner of Café Mediterranean.

The public's initial response to the opening of the outlet was beyond expectations. "We didn't expect it. The turnout was pretty good," Marla recounted.

Wanting the food offering to be as authentic as possible, sourcing of the ingredients and raw materials for the restaurant, in the beginning, was a concern. The owners employed non-traditional methods, sourcing the ingredients themselves and tapping friends living abroad, particularly in the Mediterranean region, to send some of the initial supplies.

To complete the dining experience, the owners paid particular attention to the design and look of the restaurant too. "We did everything ourselves, picked the best ingredients and recipes. Even with the interiors, we didn't have an architect to do it. Although every outlet has a slightly different look, the experience is the same," explained Marla.

Ensuring quality and authenticity of ingredients and overall dining experience were some of the major reasons that led to the growth of Café Mediterranean—growing to a chain of outlets in various upscale locations in Metro Manila to date.



Expansion, via franchising, then became a natural course for this unique food business concept. But despite numerous inquiries from customers both local and foreign, the owners of Café Mediterranean wanted to make sure that things were in order before venturing into this form of business expansion.

"We were doing things just a day at a time. A lot of people were asking—got inquiry even from as far as Hong Kong. Last year, we started to franchise," revealed Marla.

Initial investment for putting up a Café Mediterranean outlet, including the franchise fee, ranges from P3.5 million to P4 million for an approximate floor space of 60 to 75 square meters. The franchisor charges royalty and advertising fees and prefers upscale locations for the restaurant. Franchisees undergo two months of training and are also required to use the franchisor's own contractor and source equipment from its specified supplier. Café Mediterranean has its own commissary.

"The franchisee has to do well. You have to have fun doing it. Especially in the food business, you have to like it and not just treat it as an investment," Marla added.

Despite the current competition, Café

Mediterranean continues to enjoy good business. Among the top three best sellers are the kebabs, gyros and the grilled items. Café Mediterranean also offers new menu items every two months.

From its quaint beginnings over a decade ago, Café Mediterranean now has outlets in posh locations in Makati, San Juan, Mandaluyong and Quezon City. Recently, Café Mediterranean opened a franchised outlet in the country's largest shopping mall. In the offing are two more stores in Boracay and Davao.

"This year we are targeting seven [stores], and add about three more next year. We're in a comfortable spot right now," declared Marla.

For further inquiries on the Café Mediterranean franchise offering, contact Lulu Dy Sun at 896-8625 or 895-8807.