EVZIN MEDITERRANEAN CUISINE

Authentic Mediterranean dishes with a rustic flare.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLY SEGRE

After opening modern Mediterranean restaurant Evzin on Palm Desert's El Paseo in early 2017, spouses and restaurateurs John Tsoutis and Maria Mertika gained such a large following that they opened a second location in nearby Palm Springs. The new venue, inside the Caliente Tropics Hotel, is a larger space with a full bar and seating for 100 but sticks with the same creative menu that made Evzin a success in the first place.

"These are our recipes," Tsoutis says. "We're focused on a Greek format with modern Middle Eastern, Spanish, and Moroccan flare. I'm Greek and Filipino, and my wife is Albanian, so we take traditional dishes and add our own touch to them."

The couple has given both venues the "gypsy-bohemian vibe" of Mykonos and Ibiza (two sun-drenched islands where Tsoutis previously owned restaurants) and create rustic fare with a focus on fresh vegetables and clean ingredients. Some of Evzin's popular dishes include the Fattoush Salad with chopped greens, local dates, sunflower seeds, and toasted pita chips; Shawarma-Spiced Lamb with burnt eggplant and mango chutney; and the Falafel Plate, with both sweet potato and fresh herb-infused falafel paired with hummus, veggies, pickles, and tahini. It's one of Evzin's many vegan options, and the staff is committed to accommodating guests' dietary restrictions.

The Palm Springs location's new bar highlights Champagne, wine, martinis, and vermouth, bringing the Coachella Valley its first "vermouth hour" in place of happy hour in addition to serving an eclec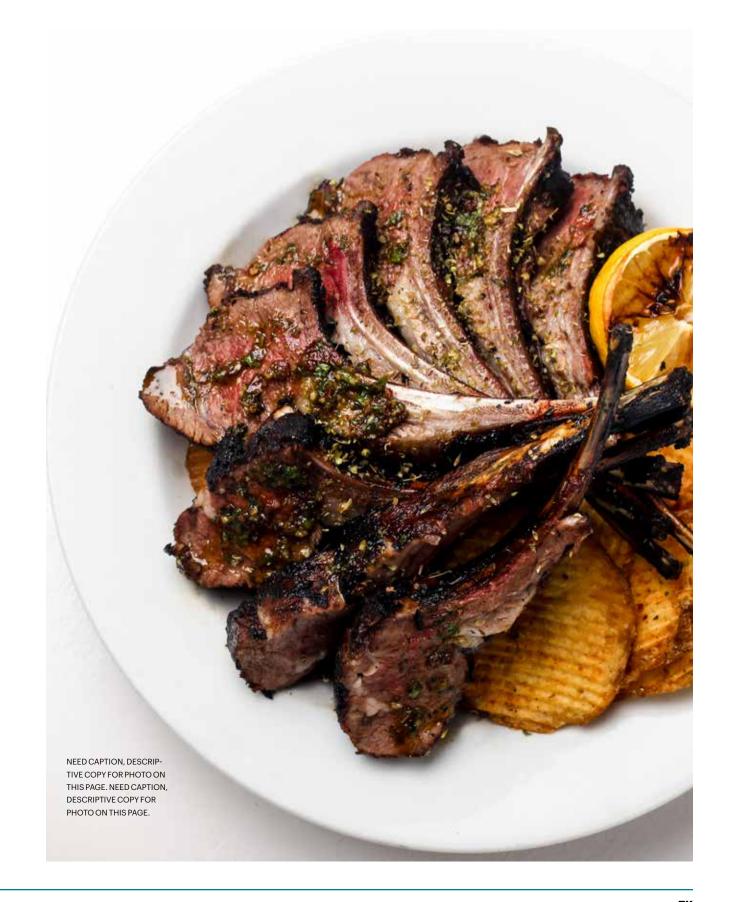tic breakfast and weekend brunch. "We are so truly grateful for the response to what we're doing," Tsoutis explains. "We love the desert and we like being a part of the community here. We host our guests, we don't serve them. We want everybody to feel at home with us."

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