

THE BUZZ ON BUSINESS



JIM MACLEAN/RIVERTOWNS ENTERPRISE

Zamir Iosepovici and Kerry Jew with their daughters, Tess and Skylar.

## Couple add Mideast accent to Warburton

By David Maggiotto

Taiim Falafel Shack, Hastings' only (and perhaps first-ever) Middle Eastern eatery, opened at 598 Warburton Avenue last week. Kerri Jew and Zamir Iosepovici are the wife-and-husband team behind the operation. The pair's impetus for opening Taiim was a love of Middle Eastern cuisine, and a belief in the lack of options for families searching for nutritious take-out.

"Our objective is to bring fast and healthy foods to the Rivertowns," Jew said from inside her storefront Monday afternoon. Taiim Falafel Shack will not be open Mondays, and despite the "closed" sign placed on the unlocked front door, curious residents periodically popped their heads in on July 26 to inquire if the place was serving. This interest was in line with Jew's observation that in the five days since their opening, "business has been steady."

For those unfamiliar with falafel, the dish is common throughout the Middle East region and consists of chickpeas ground together with spices, rolled into golf ball-sized spheres, and deep-fried. The falafel are often served inside split pita bread, and at Taiim the falafel sandwiches

will be accompanied by a schmear of hummus, diced cucumbers and tomatoes, pickled turnips, and tahini sauce.

Taiim also serves babaghanouj (grilled eggplant puree) and hummus (puree of chickpea, tahini, lemon, garlic) sandwiches. All vegetarian sandwiches are \$5 and

served on pitas from Damascus Bakeries, located in Brooklyn. Meat sandwiches are also available, such as lamb shish kebab (\$8) and chicken shawarma (\$7), as are salads, desserts, and rotating dinner specials.

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## Taiim Falafel

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Jew and Iosepovici are Hastings residents and relative newcomers to the food business. Around the time they moved to the village three years ago, they invested with a small group of partners in Zeina, a large Mediterranean restaurant in Highland Park, N.J. The investment marked a shift in their careers thus far. Iosepovici continues to maintain a private law practice in Brooklyn full-time, while Jew, a former lawyer, had recently been heading the facilities division at Columbia University.

Jew is from Long Island, and the couple, both now 41, met in high school there in the mid-80s. Iosepovici is Israeli and always adored the street food of his home country. Jew, too, became enamored of Middle Eastern cuisine on trips with her husband to Israel, and over the years she became a proficient cook and avid consumer of Middle Eastern dishes.

Late last winter the couple noticed a "for rent" sign in the storefront at 598 Warburton, which had long been occupied by Comfort, and was before that the long-

standing home of La Vera Pizzeria. The couple had been discussing full ownership and management of a small food operation since they became involved with Zeina, and the availability of the perfect location got the ball rolling.

They explored the local market for spaces, inquiring about storefronts in Dobbs Ferry and Hartsdale, but nothing compared to the allure of Warburton Avenue. "We live here, we love it here," Jew said. "This is something we could do that this community would like and appreciate." She said that if she were going to be the full-time manager, the operation would have to be close to home. Central Avenue, for example, was out of the question, and no other options competed with a spot in the village.

After signing a lease in mid-April, the couple installed new kitchen equipment, retiled the floors, and upgraded the hood exhaust system. They created a cushioned banquettes with three square wooden tables before it. There is a counter to sit at as well, and while the bulk of their business will be take-out, the eatery comfortably seats about a dozen patrons.

The menu is a scaled-down model of the Middle Eastern fare offered at Zeina. Jew and Iosepovici learned how to prepare

the dishes at a commercial level and tweaked the recipes themselves. They hired Abu Galib, a native Jordanian, as the chef who will oversee the daily food execution in the kitchen. They met Galib, who cooked professionally for more than 30 years in Jordan before moving to the U.S. about a decade ago, through a connection at their other restaurant.

For marketing needs, Web site, and logo design, the couple enlisted the help of 744 Creative, a small business run by friends and fellow Hastings residents Howard Grossman and Jennifer Holiday. Prior to opening last Wednesday, Taiim participated in Friday Night Live, handing out free samples to residents milling in the street.

"Our food is simple," Jew attested, while also touting its nutritional value. Middle Eastern food tends to rely on spices, lemon, and garlic for flavor, rather than fats, such as butter. Their falafel are deep-fried, however, but Jew said the cooking method associated with the other hot dishes at Taiim is grilling. Taiim will also specialize in cold dishes, such as chopped salads and tabbouleh, a side dish of bulgur (cracked wheat) tossed with fresh parsley, tomatoes, lemon juice, olive oil, and spices.

Jew believes the intense flavors of the cuisine will appeal to kids and adults

alike. The couple have two daughters: Skylar, who is 10 and entering fifth grade, and Tess, who is 5 and beginning kindergarten in the fall. Taiim's falafel has received both daughters' approval, as well as that of Iosepovici's cousin, recently visiting from Israel. "If you lived in Israel, this is the food you would get," Jew said of Taiim's offerings.

Hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Take-out orders can be placed by calling 478-0006. More information about the cuisine can be found on the Web site [taiimfalafelshack.com](http://taiimfalafelshack.com). The menu continues to evolve, and updated daily specials are posted on the business' Facebook page.

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