

# News Clips Report

## More restaurants at Hammond Square Hammond Daily Star

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A new family-style restaurant specializing in gourmet hamburgers will open in September, a Greek and Lebanese cafe within the next two weeks, and a Cajun-Mediterranean-Asian restaurant Aug. 23, all at **Hammond Square.**

Albasha Greek

and Lebanese Cafe

Albasha Greek and Lebanese Cafe owner Nabeel Badawi was at the restaurant Wednesday morning overseeing final work on the 3,300-square-foot restaurant across from the Palace Theatre.

Workers with Kent Construction of Mandeville were installing ceiling tiles. Morning sun shone through the east side windows which Badawi said would be shaded by an extended awning to be installed over the large patio seating area.

Altogether, the cafe will seat 120 inside and outside, he said.

The Hammond Albasha is the seventh in the chain. Four are in Baton Rouge, one in Covington and another in Shreveport. Other owners include Naser Abudyak and Foad and Alex Samarah, two brothers who will manage the Hammond restaurant.

Foad Samarah, who also runs the Covington location, said the restaurant was to open Monday but will have to wait another week because of the fire marshals inspection next Wednesday.

The staff of 20 to 30 people in Hammond is hired, and they are being trained in Covington.

The family-owned business opened its first Albasha in 1992. The owners are from Lebanon.

Phils Grill

Phils Grill, located in Metairie and owned by native New Orleanian Phil deGruy, will open a second location at **Hammond Square.**

General Manager Melissa Penter said the opening date is not set, but the restaurant will have the same concept of a little neighborhood burger joint, offering a million different combinations created by an inhouse chef, Justin Jones.

The Hammond restaurant will be a little bigger than the Metairie restaurant which seats between 60 and 70 patrons and will hire 30-plus employees.

The Phils Grill concept is building a burger, and a new chefs special is added monthly.

We give you the menu and a pencil, Penter said.

The customer will circle the

See RESTAURANTS, 2A

different types of meat bison, turducken, hot sausage blend or spicy pork or a veggie burger, then chooses a bun from among white, poppy seed, whole wheat or sun-dried tomato, finishing with 11 types of cheese, and more than 20 toppings and 18 sauces.

We make everything in house, she said. We dont use anybody elses products.

The restaurant also offiers salads and sandwiches, including tuna, chicken club, buffalo chicken ranch and the adult grilled cheese which piles on bacon and ham. Phils also specializes in frosty milk shakes.

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The restaurant is welcoming to families, Penter said. DeGruy loved the bar atmosphere of some restaurants but always regretted not being able to bring his children, so he came up with a concept for a restaurant with a bar atmosphere where children are welcome.

The restaurant especially wants to welcome the Southeastern Louisiana University community, and the restaurant staff is encouraged to go crazy during football season by wearing school attire and painting their faces.

DeGruy picked Hammond because the people are crazy about New Orleans, and we loved the idea of college kids coming into the restaurant after sporting events, adding to the late night business.

But everyone's welcome, she said.

The restaurant hosts Kids Night on Tuesdays starting at 4 p.m. when kids can build their own ice cream sundaes, she said.

Hours will be Monday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Penter said, but the owner is considering extending hours in Hammond, especially for SLU students.

While the owner is bringing its own management, he is taking applications for openings. Interested persons can call (504) 324-9080 or go online at [phils-grill.com](http://phils-grill.com) and apply.

Six partners—two from New Orleans and four from Nashville, Tenn.—will open East of Italy. The partners opened their first restaurant, Cool Beans Italian Bistro, in Murfreesboro, Tenn., over the weekend.

Hui Nguyen, a New Orleans resident, said he will move to Hammond within the next month to oversee construction of the restaurant and will stay on to manage the place.

The menu will be basically Italian, with fresh-baked bread every day.

It's basically Italian food with some Cajun, Mediterranean and Asian flair, thus East of Italy, he said.

The concept is delivered by varying the spices, for example, using lemongrass instead of parsley, he said. The pizzas, sandwiches and pastas will be staples with a large appetizer menu that will change monthly.

Nguyen said owners are taking bids for 2,300-square-foot buildout that will have an open floor plan with dining downstairs and a mezzanine upstairs which looks down over the bar area and into the kitchen. The dining room alone will seat 93.

East of Italy will be needing 35 employees, and Nguyen said around Aug. 1 the restaurant will be conducting interviews both at the employment office and Southeastern Louisiana University.