

ADO'S TASTE OF EUROPE

HOMEY BALKANS NOW IN DUBUQUE

BY SUNIL MALAPATI

Ado's Taste of Europe is an apt title for what this restaurant and grocery offers. Ado refers to the nickname of Adnan Masinovic, beloved son of the owners, and representative of the homey food served in the restaurant. The rather ambitious "Taste of Europe" might refer to the range of Balkan goodies you can buy in the grocery store, though it represents a small slice of a lesser-known region of Europe.

Mirsad Masinovic is a refugee from the densely forested northwestern Bosnia, close to Croatia, and has lived in Dubuque for close to two decades. He worked many jobs, most notably trucking for Eagle Window and Door. He went back to Bosnia after a divorce to marry Emina and brought her and stepdaughter Selina to Dubuque. After he was laid off this April amid the pandemic, the family

decided to look into opening a grocery store with takeout food, and that plan eventually morphed into a restaurant-grocery store combination. They looked at successful Bosnian restaurants in Waterloo and looked inward at their own tastes when deciding on the menu and what they would sell. It should come as no surprise, food at Ado's feels like being invited to a family meal.

Hospitality seems to come naturally to the Masinovics; when I visited Ado's early in the morning to learn more about the food and the venture, Selina offered me some Bosnian coffee. I immediately felt at home! Bosnians love their coffee, developing a taste as children. One of the oldest drinks in the world, coffee traditions are firmly established in many countries in this part of the world. Coffee



PLATTER

is an invitation to dawdle, to sip small cups by pouring from a small coffee pot called *dvezva*. The coffee grounds settle at the bottom, and you can stir it to make it stronger; it is not as thick as Turkish coffee, but stronger than drip coffee. You can buy yourself your own *dvezva* and cups in the store and many different kinds of Bosnian coffee (roasted to Bosnian preferences, not grown there).

Bosnian cuisine in particular and Balkan food in general shows both European and Asian influences. The meat is treated with few spices and mostly grilled; the sweets often quite complex and calorie dense; the bread a marvelous hybrid of pita and English muffin. The flavor base is a mixture of dehydrated root vegetables like carrot, parsnip, potato, and celery with small amounts of herbs and spices like parsley, black pepper, and nutmeg. You can buy the flavor base in small packets (trade name: *Vegeta*, no, not the *Dragon Ball* smirker). Most of the flavor is from the meat or vegetables cooked in their own juices, with the humble results enormously appealing. No wonder Dubuque has embraced Ado's in the short time it has been open!

Any discussion of Ado's food has to start with *Lepinja*, the flatbread with a slight sourdough taste, a naan-like texture on the outside and an English muffin texture inside—lots of nooks and crannies toasting and buttering. It is unlike any bread I have tasted, and I fell in love with it immediately. Ado's gets the bread partially baked from a Bosnian supplier in St. Louis and bakes them fresh every day. The bread is a staple of almost all dishes and their platters.

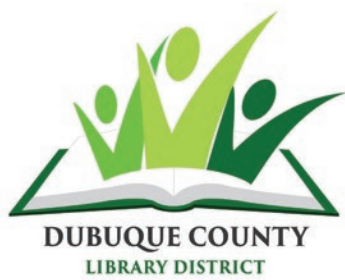
If you are looking for enough food to feed a small army, start with one of those platters. Four of our COVID family shared a \$25 platter for dinner, and we all had enough for lunch the next day!

In addition to the flatbread and French fries, the platter included chicken, steak, beef sausages, grilled minced beef, sweet peppers, and mushrooms. The sausages (both the link sausage and *cevapi*, the most popular of the sausages) come from a supplier of Bosnian groceries. Both the sausages are very beef-forward with few spices to mask the flavor. A Bosnian style hamburger is made with minced beef, garlic, olive oil, parsley, and black pepper and has the texture of beef shawarma. The platter is certainly a feast for meat-lovers. I personally could have used more vegetables or some fresh elements to provide a break from all the meat. There must have been others who felt the same way because Ado's is now offering more options in catered choices: rice with vegetables, mashed potatoes, just flatbread, and grilled meats as you want them.

The aforementioned grilled meats are also the basis of sandwiches. A fair warning: the portions are huge and make for a pretty big meal. The *cevapi* and chicken are served between sliced flatbread with onions and sour cream. The link sausage is served with lettuce, onion and tomatoes. The European hamburger is served with lettuce, onion, and tomatoes with ranch dressing. The addition of lettuce and tomatoes helps with the balance of meat and bread, with some sandwiches feeling rather heavy. Again, it seems Ado's has listened to patrons and now offers a meal with grilled chicken, rice with vegetables, and a side salad.

In addition to grilled meats, Ado's also has the special of the day on certain weekdays. The specials are family recipes and have that special touch of a handed-down recipe about them. *Sarma* is a classic dish from the region, with rice and smoked ground beef wrapped in a cabbage leaf and served with a flavorful paprika-based sauce. Just as there

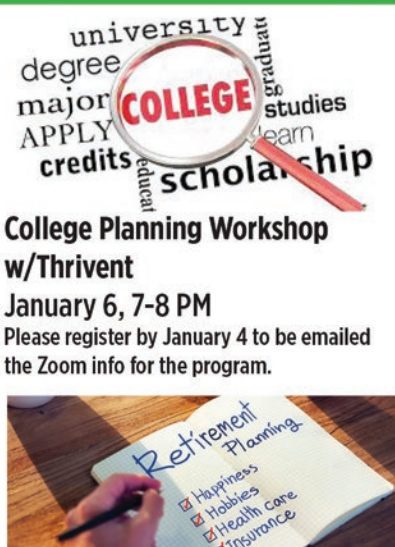
For all library events that require pre-registration, please visit:
www.dubcolib.lib.ia.us/events-programs/register-for-any-program/



Register for February DCLD programs January 4-18, if you would like to receive a supply kit.
 You can register at address above.

Ongoing programs
 (register by the day before each program to receive the Zoom info): Story Time, Early Elementary Story Starters, Story Starters, Family Trivia, Dial-In Device Advice. Visit the DCLD website and calendars for dates.

College Planning Workshop w/Thrivent
 January 6, 7-8 PM
 Please register by January 4 to be emailed the Zoom info for the program.



Retirement & Taxes w/Thrivent
 January 12, 1-2 PM
 Please register by January 11 to be emailed the Zoom info for the program.

Five Convenient County Locations...

- Asbury 5290 Grand Meadow Dr., 563-582-0008
- Epworth - 110 Bierman Road S.E., 563-876-3388
- Farley/Drexler Middle School. 405 3rd Ave. N.E., 563-744-3371 ext. 5160
- Holy Cross - 895 Main Street, 563-870-2082
- NICC/Peosta - 8342 NICC Dr., 563-556-5110 ext. 224

is a meatloaf for every family, there is a Sarma for every family, and this one is from Emina. The smoky taste pervades the sauce with creamy mashed potatoes as the perfect complement. Sarma is served every Tuesday. Thursday specials are stuffed peppers with mashed potatoes and sauce—I did not get to taste that, I will reserve that for future visits!



COFFEE



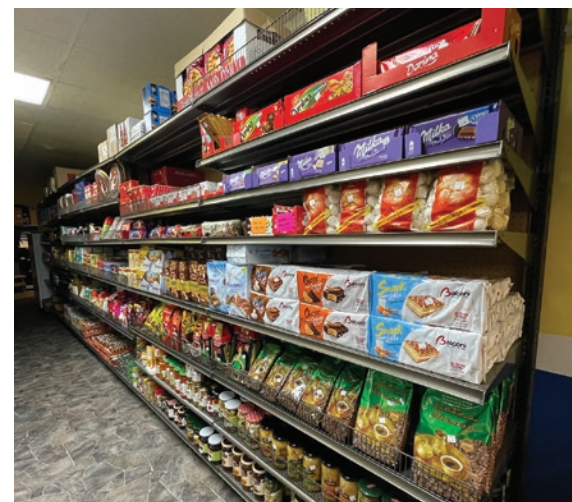
PIES

One set of menu items that have to be ordered ahead of time are the pies. These do not look like what you expect. The pie-filling can be beef, cheese, or spinach (with ricotta-like cheese). It is wrapped in dough in the form of a cylinder, and the cylinder is arranged in the form of a loose spiral before baking. The pie is a labor of love and tastes great whether fresh out of the oven or cold the next day. I ate a small spinach pie on a long car ride and not only did it taste delicious cold, it sustained me for the whole ride! You do need to order the pies the day before as it does take time for Emina or Selina to carefully roll and wrap them. It is worth the wait.

My absolute favorite item on the menu, and luckily one you only wait for few minutes for, are the crepes. Delicate crepes filled with Nutella (chocolate-hazelnut heaven) and berries and topped with strawberry, chocolate or caramel sauce. You can buy crepe mix in their store and try and make it yourself, but I prefer to let the chefs do what they do best and just indulge.

In addition to crepes, there are a lot of sweets on display in the grocery store portion of Ado's. Many of them carry strange and exotic names to me, but perhaps nothing more than a hug from home to the Masinovic family. If you are doubtful about what is in a package, the owners are more than willing to tell you all about it. I decided to try Lokum with walnuts, a kind of Turkish delight I was assured would be perfect with coffee. Small cubes of gustatory pleasure dusted in sugar, one or two of these were indeed perfect with or without coffee. I am now fighting with my sister and kids over the remaining pieces (should have gotten another box).

Walking into an ethnic food store or a restaurant is a brief sojourn into another culture, unfamiliar syllables dancing on the tongue intoxicated by new flavors and textures. The warm hosts (somehow "proprietors" seems too cold a word) seem excited to show you around and share a bit of themselves through their food and drink. I knew little of Balkan food going in, and I cannot wait to explore more with Ado's. Dubuque, I am hoping you will do your part in keeping them around! ■



ADO'S TASTE OF EUROPE, RESTAURANT & GROCERY

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563-239-9799

Facebook: Ado's Taste of Europe

Hours: Sun and Tue-Sat: 10 AM-6 PM; Mon: Closed

SUNIL MALAPATI

SUNIL IS NERDY ABOUT ALL THINGS FOOD, SCIENCE, FOOD SCIENCE AND THEATRE. HE WILL GLADLY ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS (AS WELL AS BORE YOU WITH FOOD LORE) IF YOU EMAIL HIM AT DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM.



WHO HAS TIME TO EAT HEALTHY IN 2021? YOU DO!

BY HY-VEE NUTRITIONISTS MEGAN HORSTMAN (ASBURY) AND AMY CORDINGLEY (LOCUST)

Sadly, willpower doesn't always win. Stress and life? Those get in the way, too. Therefore your attempt at eating healthy is usually the first to go. But Happy New Year, readers! January marks the start of resolution season, and weight loss typically tops the list. What are you going to do differently this year? There is an often forgotten weight management secret—a secret that doesn't require detox dieting or cardboard meals. This secret is a simple, yet powerful, habit to develop.

Preparation! That's it! Without this, even the most dedicated healthy eaters can fall off track. Now that you know the secret, here's how to put forth the effort.

Stop your Scroll and Make a Meal Plan: There's no guessing how much time is spent on our phones these days, as a daily average report is sent at the end of each week (whether you were asking for one or not). Ever wonder how productive you'd be if you weren't nose deep in your news feed? Take 20 minutes between social media sites and sit down and plan a weekly menu. Heck, just worry about the dinner meal (bonus if those dinner ideas have leftovers = lunch the next day).

Don't Start from Scratch: Sure, the cookbook you received from your grandma has hundreds of wonderful recipes, but the last thing you need to worry about are new menu items while working on this

new habit. Start with your go-to meals—tacos, spaghetti, or soups, perhaps. Repeat these every few weeks. Then, when you're up to it, add a new recipe. hy-vee.com has hundreds to choose from. Or, take advantage of your Hy-Vee dietitian's new Healthy Habits program—a weekly meal plan made just for you.

Lean on Frozen Veggies: Just as nutritious as their fresh counterparts, frozen produce should be a staple on your grocery list. First of all, many of us don't eat the recommended five cups of fruits and veggies daily, and no meal is complete without a pop of color. Brave the cold and take a peek behind the frozen doors. There are so many products that abandon the bland and scream flavor, making it an easy add to your meal plates.

Ask for Help: Your solution for all your resolutions? Possibly some guidance from a Hy-Vee dietitian. Turn your health goals into action with some assistance from a nutrition expert, as consultations and a variety of programs are offered both in person and virtually.

Life's hectic, but remember meal planning and eating healthy doesn't have to be. I dare you to do this year differently. Small steps lead to big wins, and a dietitian found within the walls of Hy-Vee can help you attain anything you want. During year 2021, be sure to make your health priority number one!



The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.