

A Mideast smoke downtown

Arabian Knight Hookah & Coffee Lounge, which is open in the Place Marie mall at 53 N. Queen St., aims to create an authentic Middle Eastern experience and a chance to socialize in a relaxed atmosphere, said owner Thirgam Al-Hussaini.

The 1,500-square-foot lounge, featuring Middle Eastern instrumental music, Arabian floor cushions and U.S.-style sofas and chairs, is a chance to enjoy a Middle Eastern coffee shop while saving on airfare, according to Al-Hussaini's father, Ehsan. Among the lounge's authentic offerings, according to Ehsan, is Turkish coffee, which is strong and thick and best drank by the shot.

Arabian Knight is starting with 11 flavors of hookah -- including strawberry, rose, coconut, watermelon and cinnamon. Hookah is a Middle Eastern method of smoking tobacco. It uses a device that looks like a lamp to heat flavored tobacco with charcoal and send it through water to one or more pipes, depending on how many are smoking. Thirgam Al-Hussaini said up to three people can fully enjoy a single hookah at once.

The lounge also offers Middle Eastern appetizers -- including hummus (a mashed chickpea dip with a sesame-seed paste, olive oil, garlic and lemon juice), baba ganoush (similar to hummus, with eggplant added) and falafel (spiced mashed chickpeas, formed into balls and deep-fried) -- and desserts, such as baklava (like the Greek version, only a little bit lighter and less sticky-sweet, Al-Hussaini said) and maamoul (date-filled cookies).

The lounge can seat 50 people, and has a large space in the back, either for a party of up to 15, or for smaller groups to share the space and get to know one another, said Al-Hussaini, a native of Najaf, Iraq, who came to the United States at age 4 and graduated from Lampeter-Strasburg High School in 2008.

Hours: Sunday to Thursday 2 p.m.-midnight; Friday to Saturday 2 p.m.-1 a.m. Phone: 824-4984

Extracted from an article in the Lancaster *Intelligencer Journal/New Era*, July 25, 2012



Owner Thirgam Al-Hussaini relaxes in the front-room lounge at the Arabian Knight Hookah and Coffee Lounge on North Queen Street. (Marty Heisey / *Intelligencer Journal/New Era* Staff)