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Reader

San Diego Smart

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intelligent life



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Sultan grills again

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Sultan Baklava brings its kebob back to El Cajon

Sultan Baklava, 169 E Main St., El Cajon. It's no secret that our region's best Mediterranean and Middle Eastern food is most often found in El Cajon. Though, for a while, some of it was found in the Gaslamp.

For a few years, Turkish chef Sultan Usta operated Sultan Kebab & Baklava out on Jamacha Road. But then about ten years ago, he moved on, reappearing a short while later Downtown with Sultan Baklava Mediterranean Cuisine. So it was that, until the pandemic came along, the Gaslamp could righteously boast killer baklava and döner kebab.

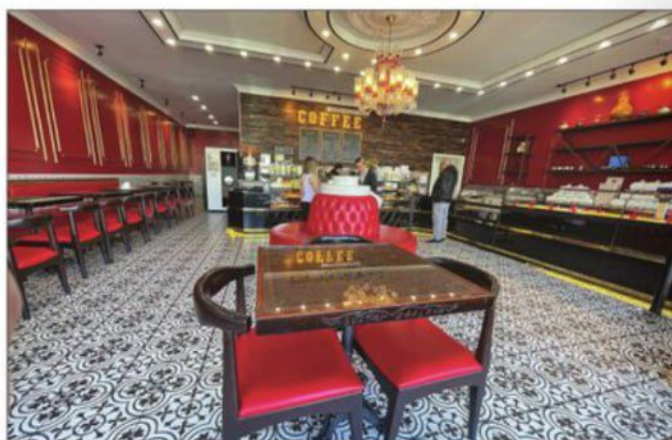
But by the end of 2021, Usta's desserts had returned to El Cajon with the opening of Sultan Baklava, on Main Street. Along with myriad baklava and Turkish delights — priced by the pound — that lavishly decorated shop serves the likes of Turkish coffee and pistachio lattes made from beans roasted on site.

And now, in the space next door, Usta's kebabs and other grilled meat specialties have returned to El Cajon, too — right next door. It may be only a subtle distinction at this point, but this newer restaurant goes by the name Sultan Mediterranean Grill.

Now, Sultan's baklava bakery and coffee shop makes an instant impression with vivid



Grilled lamb at the newly-returned-to-El Cajon Sultan Mediterranean Grill.



The lavish interior of Main Street's Sultan Baklava.

red upholstery, ornate floor tiles, and a large crystal chandelier. So I'll admit to being a little disappointed when I found the Grill to be a much more subdued counter shop, set up to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Happily, the tastefully casual interior portends good taste on the plate.

The day begins with so-called Turkish breakfasts, presented on sectional, round platters loaded with treats. These feature eggs and sausage, and a veritable *meze* platter, though most intriguing is the breakfast of olives, clotted cream and honey, plus a smattering of walnuts with dried fruits such as dates, figs, and apricots (\$20).

Moving on to lunch, you can get a standard plate of those *meze* (dolma, hummus, and *baba ghanoush* plus basmati rice) for \$15, everything dusted with sumac and served with a fluffy, fresh flatbread.

This flatbread will go with everything on the grill menu, which begins with döner (\$17) and runs through a litany of meat, poultry, and salmon kebabs ranging from \$18 to \$25. There are almost too many to choose from, though I can vouch for the grilled lamb at least. This was served with super thin flatbread — effectively a grilled flour tortilla coated with a blend of spices.

The prices run a bit higher than we might expect for Mediterranean food or downtown El Cajon. It might be inflation, or it might be that what's on the plate here tastes a bit better than the fast casual Mediterranean eateries that continue to pop up all around El Cajon and elsewhere. At the least, I expect Gaslamp visitors would be happy to spend \$25 on terrific Mediterranean food right about now. Even if, as it was before, they'll have to drive to El Cajon to get it.

by Ian Anderson

Voted **BEST** Indian Restaurant in San Diego
Himalayan Palace Restaurant



LUNCH SPECIAL

M-F 11AM to 3PM
Includes
• Two Entrées
• Rice
• 2 pc Naan Bread (Garlic Naan \$0.50 extra)
• Dessert
• Home Made Pickle

\$11.95

ONLY For Inside Dining or Take Out

FAMILY MEAL

Includes
• Choice of 3 Entrées
1 Veggie entrée
1 Chicken entrée
1 Lamb entrée (Tandoori items excluded)
• 1 Appetizer (Veggie Samosa or Pakoda)
• Rice
• 1 Naan Bread
• 1 Dessert

\$49.95

ONLY For Inside Dining or Take Out

DINNER FOR TWO

Includes
• Choose 2 Entrées (Tandoori items Excluded)
• 1 Appetizer (Veggie Samosa or Pakoda)
• Rice • 1 Naan Bread
• 1 Dessert

\$39.99

ONLY For Dine In-Only

\$5 OFF

Any Purchase of \$25 or More

For Inside Dining or Take Out. Expires 2/23/23

Not Valid with Any Other Offer. Not Valid with Lunch Special. One Coupon per Family or Group

\$10 OFF

Any Purchase of \$50 or More

Family Owned. Over 32 Years Making Healthy Indian & Nepalese Food.

5 Stars on yelp

Open for Inside and Outdoor Dining on Our Patio! Pick-up and Delivery Available Through Third Parties.

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(619) 510-4966 • www.himalayanpalacesd.com
Open Wed-Mon 11 AM-3 PM Lunch • 4 PM-9 PM Dinner • Closed Tuesdays

Valentine's Day Dining

5 Course Candlelit Dinner & Wine Pairing Enjoy a romantic upscale dining experience and wine pairing hosted by the founder of Alexis George Winery, George Brown. Tuesday, February 14, 6pm: \$150. Sally's Fish House & Bar, One Market Place at Manchester Grand Hyatt. (DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO)

Don't Text The Ex Anti-Valentine's Day Brunch Enjoy a free Love Potion #9 Shot with the purchase of any brunch entree. Indulge in classic brunch favorites with a Spanish twist alongside bottomless mimosas. Dinner menu is also available during brunch. Saturday, February 11, 11am; Cafe Sevilla Tapas Bar, 353 Fifth Avenue. (DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO)

Escondido Chocolate Festival Stroll through Downtown Escondido various designated restaurants, shops and art galleries while sampling chocolates paired with local fine wine, champagne, craft beer and spirit tastings. Saturday, February 11, 12pm; \$35-\$55. 21 and up. Maple Street Plaza, On Maple Street between Grand Avenue and Valley Parkway. (ESCONDIDO)

Galentine's Day Brunch Party Enjoy a free Peach Bellini with the purchase of any brunch entree. Indulge in classic brunch favorites with a Spanish twist alongside bottomless mimosas. Dinner menu is also available during brunch. Reservations are recommended. Sunday, February 12, 11am; Cafe Sevilla Tapas Bar, 353 Fifth Avenue. (DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO)

Lovebirds Valentine's Special Valentine BBQ specials. Tuesday, February 14, 11am; Smokey and the Brisket, 5465 Lake Murray Blvd. (LA MESA)

Valentine's Day at The Cove Enjoy a romantic, ocean-view dining experience with a prix-fixe menu featuring a variety of appetizers, entrées and desserts

that celebrate the season's freshest ingredients. Tuesday, February 14, 4pm; free-\$95. George's at the Cove Ocean Terrace, 1250 Prospect Street. (LA JOLLA)

Valentine's Day on Mission Bay After being greeted with a complimentary rose, cozy up for a three-course dinner menu and a backdrop of Mission Bay. Toast your special someone with an optional wine pairing or a champagne cocktail to complete your dining experience. Tuesday, February 14, 5:30pm; \$95-\$120. 18 and up. Oceana Coastal Kitchen, 3999 Mission Boulevard. (MISSION BEACH)

Valentine's Day on the Bay Start your dinner with a complimentary rose and champagne toast, and continue your evening with a curated menu with an optional wine pairing. Tuesday, February 14, 5:30pm; \$95-\$120. 21 and up. Bahia Resort Hotel, 998 West Mission Bay Drive. (MISSION BEACH)

Valentine's Dinner Celebrate in a grand way with your lover and a lavish nine-course dinner, exclusively on Valentine's. Tuesday, February 14, 5pm; \$225. Fairmont Grand Del Mar, 5300 Grand Del Mar Court. (GARMET VALLEY)

Valentines Specials Seafood boil for two, Fridays, 12pm; Tuesdays, 12pm; through Tuesday, February 14, free. 21 and up. Take the Bait, 7319 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. (CLAIREMONT)

Valentine's Day Valentine's Day Dinner with garden-to-table oysters and caviar, a two-course pasta offering, land and sea entrees, a grand finale of Triple Berry Tart and more (four-course menu). Tuesday, February 14, 5pm; \$95. Piper, 105 Mission Avenue. (OCEANSIDE)

Valentine's Dinner: A Night in Paris Enjoy a 3-course meal prepared by Executive Chef Michael Levine. Tuesday, February 14, 6pm; \$65-\$85. Beaumont's, 5662 La Jolla Boulevard. (LA JOLLA)