

# FOOD & LIFE

## Chocolate for Easter

Truffle Treasures owner Lara Vaarre reveals the secret to tasty eggs, B3



## Buff like Obama

Michelle Obama's arms are famous, and yours can be too, B5



## RECIPES

- Chicken Tagine, B3
- Honey-Dipped Briovata, B3
- Pastilla Royale, B3
- Chocolate Easter Eggs, B4

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OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, SECTION B

# Moroccan delights

## Giving the Fur Ball a taste of Casablanca



RON EADE

The National Gallery's great hall will be transformed into Rick's Café Americain from the 1942 Hollywood classic *Casablanca* Saturday as the Ottawa Humane Society rolls out its fifth annual Fur Ball gala fundraiser with a decidedly Moroccan twist.

"We'll be showing the movie during dinner and the theme will be carried over to the decor as well, with palm trees, lanterns on the tables, volunteers dressed in Moroccan clothing," says society spokeswoman Tara Jackson.

Moroccan cuisine is typically fragrant, packed with flavour and exciting if only because there is so much happening at once on the plate — rather like the country itself. On the northwest coast of Africa, Morocco has varied topography, with the Atlantic Ocean to the west,



PHOTOS BY WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Chicken tagine with green olives and lemon is popular in the real Casablanca.

the Mediterranean Sea to the north, and the arid Sahara Desert to the south and east. Casablanca is its major city, on the coast. Meandering

north to south are mountain ranges mostly populated by the indigenous Berbers.

Flavour accents in Moroccan food may come from

cinnamon, cardamom, orange water, fresh fruits and preserved salted lemon.

While hors d'oeuvres that will be served before dinner

do have Moroccan flavours (citrus, couscous, spiced lamb, saffron and preserved lemon), the sold-out gala dinner does not. If anything, the meal is more American and comparatively tame, with albacore tuna loin, East Coast lobster and mascarpone risotto, smoked châteaubriand and chocolate terrine. No couscous, no fragrant tagines.

"We take into account that it's a high-end event and our guests are there for a good time," Jackson says. "They expect a sumptuous dinner, which is mostly focused on Canadian ingredients. But the decor and entertainment is mostly *Casablanca*."

Chef Kurt Waldele, whose company K-W Catering is doing the food, said the menu is deliberately American to reflect the tone of the famous movie. "It's a play on Rick's Café and they didn't serve Moroccan food,"

Waldele says. "So we're serving upscale American food. For \$225, people don't expect couscous with chicken. They want something that sounds more expensive."

For a taste of Moroccan cuisine, we dropped by the Kasbah Village at 251 Laurier Ave. W., where owner Khalid Bouazza and his wife Fadma happily prepared some traditional favourites using recipes on page B3 and at ottawacitizen.com.

"Moroccan cuisine for me is one of the freshest tastes," Bouazza says. "By that I mean the ingredients must always be fresh, we serve homemade fresh bread, and our meat is *halal*," an Arabic term designating, in this



Pastilla royale is a favourite Moroccan dish, says Khalid Bouazza of Kasbah Village.

case, food that is permitted by Islamic law and custom.

"The flavours are always bright," Bouazza says. "We use ingredients like fresh and preserved lemon, and the dishes are always fragrant with spices and blossoms. We cook a lot with fruit like raisins in chicken dishes, or apples, pears, pineapple, plums and roasted almonds."

See TASTE on PAGE B3

Stay on top of food news with Ron Eade's blog at

OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

OMNIVORE'S OTTAWA

## OTTAWA CITIZEN DINING GUIDE — PART 3

# The western front

## Celebrating diversity from Chinatown to Bells Corners

BY ANNE DESBRISAY

Part 3 of the Dining Guide focuses on the restaurant-rich neighbourhoods of Ottawa's western front, from Chinatown and Preston Street, to Westboro to Centrepoinette and west to Bells Corners.

As for every entry in this year's guide, these are restaurants I recommend, some unequivocally, others with reservations. But for whatever mood you're in, budget that fits you or demographic you fit into, you should be able to find something that suits.

Please keep in mind this list is a guide only, based on my experiences. There's no guarantee of what you will find.

### Chinatown

#### FUSCHIAN

726 Somerset St. W., 613-230-6815 \$

**Cuisine:** Asian. Fresh, hot, fast and a good blend of Vietnamese and Chinese cuisines, run by very fine people. Fish is a strength, so are salad rolls and lemongrass chicken.

#### HOT PEPPERS

495 Somerset St. W., 613-233-4687 hot-peppers.ca \$\$

**Cuisine:** Thai. It calls itself an "expressive Thai restaurant" with an upstairs wine bar. Fried oysters, curried mussels, spicy crab cakes with mango sauce, steamed salmon with plum and ginger.

#### JADELAND

625 Somerset St. W., 613-233-0204 \$

**Cuisine:** Chinese. It's not the decor that has folks lined up

out its door. Maybe it's the food: pickeler with chili and garlic, squid with snow pea tips, bitter melon and beef in black bean sauce.

#### JO MOON TING

832 Somerset St. W., 613-237-8887 \$

**Cuisine:** Chinese. Ten tables in a pokey little room, or take-away counter with its window-view of barbecue treats. Whether in-house or to-go, the house chicken, roast pork and barbecue duck are the way-to-go.

#### MEKONG

637 Somerset St. W., 613-237-7717 mekong.ca \$

**Cuisine:** Asian. Vietnamese, Chinese and Thai dishes on the menu. Seafood is treated well. Good too are the soups, pot stickers, shrimp dumplings, crispy beef and braised duck.

See GUIDE on PAGE B2



PAT MCGRATH, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Mekong restaurant owner/chef Dennis Luc offers a good cross-section of well-treated Asian food.

### Price guide

Loosely based on a three-course dinner for two, with taxes, but before drinks or tip.

- \$: Less than \$40
- \$\$: \$40 to \$70
- \$\$\$: \$71 to \$100
- \$\$\$\$: More than \$100

Unless stated otherwise, all restaurants accept major credit cards and reservations, and many now have websites where you will find their menus and hours of operation. Call about wheelchair accessibility.

### About this series

**March 12: Old Ottawa**  
ByWard Market, Lowertown, Sandy Hill

**March 19: Central Ottawa**  
Downtown, Centretown, Glebe, Old Ottawa South

**TODAY: West of the Rideau**  
Chinatown, Preston Street, Hintonburg, West Wellington, Westboro, Centrepoinette, Bells Corners

**April 2: East of the Rideau**  
New Edinburgh, Vanier, Alta Vista, Hunt Club

**April 9: On the edges**  
Outside the greenbelt and out of town

**April 16: Gatineau**  
and elsewhere in Quebec

DOWNLOAD PDFs of the first three instalments of the 2009 Dining Guide at

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