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Reem's Steaks Brings Philly to Orinda

By A.K. Carroll



Reem's Steaks on Moraga Way in Orinda.

Photos A.K. Carroll

After weeks of lying dormant, 70 Moraga Way (former home of Turquoise Mediterranean Grill) is bustling with the efforts of a newcomer to the Lamorinda food scene — Reem's Steaks.

No, that's not a typo. Not to be confused with historic local Donald Rheem (namesake of Rheem Boulevard and the Rheem Theater), Reem's Steaks takes its title from Reem Masarweh, wife of Azmi "Alex" Masarweh, the owner of nearby Petra Café. Reem's Steaks — a simple sandwich shop that specializes in cheese steaks — is the couple's third restaurant venture.

When asked how he came up with the concept for his newest eatery, Masarweh replied, "It was easy. Orinda (already) had everything, except Philly steaks." Thanks to Reem's, that problem is solved.

The new digs are nothing fancy and not much different from when it was Turquoise Grill, aside from a fresh coat of paint and a change of hands. Half a dozen two-tops make up the seating in the tidy space, the rest of which is occupied by a cold case, counter, cash register and soda machine.

Late in the afternoon midweek, I hit the calm between lunch and dinner shifts and took the opportunity to chat with the kid behind the counter. He was helpful and friendly with a sort of small town eagerness that is refreshing

to find. His favorite offering right now is the Buffalo chicken, but my being a first-timer also steered me toward something more traditional.

The focal point of the menu is the namesake cheesesteak, a sandwich comprised of thinly sliced beefsteak smothered in melted cheese and stacked on a thick Italian hoagie bun. The origins of the entrée come from 1930s Philadelphia (hence, the "Philly") and have been attributed to hotdog vendor named Pat Olivieri.

Reem's cheesesteaks include the Original Philly, a mushroom cheesesteak, pepper cheesesteak and super cheesesteak, which features grilled onion, green pepper, and grilled mushroom add-ons. Reem's also offers chicken four chicken Phillys, including buffalo and teriyaki versions.

Other menu items include a short list of fresh salads, nearly a dozen burgers, fish and chips, chicken strips and shrimp. A smattering of appetizers and sides includes garlic fries, chili fries, calamari, fried zucchini, onion rings and cole slaw. A five-item kid's menu is available for little ones and dessert options consist of crepes and milkshakes.

Prices are modest, with appetizers starting at \$4, cheesesteaks and burgers averaging \$7-8, and entrees running from \$10-15. You can add fries and a soda to any meal for an upcharge for \$3.99.

One month after opening, Yelp reviewers have grumbled in one accord when remarking on Reem's bread-to-meat ratio, describing the hoagie as a sizable chunk of dough. My own experience was a little different. After much deliberation, I opted for the super cheesesteak, which supplements the standard serving of meat with a pile of grilled veggies. The sandwich didn't seem skimpy for the price point (I actually split it across two meals), but I can empathize with wanting a little more substance on the bun.

Meals are made to order — you can actually watch as your steak strips and peppers sizzle on the grill behind the counter — and easily plopped into take away containers for those who are headed to the reservoir or stepping out for a quick lunch break. But be forewarned, these sandwiches are best consumed immediately. The current hoagies easily sop up juices, but lack the structure needed to hold hefty contents, which leaves a limited timeline between a stiff and soggy sandwich.

In addition to the current menu, there is a regular rotation of daily specials, such as chicken corn chowder and grilled rib eye with au jus. Reem's also plans to add wraps and other options to their summer menu. Like many restaurants of its ilk, the sandwich shop wants to offer something for everyone, but to any first time visitor, I'd suggest starting with the standard. We may be a long way from Philadelphia, but you're only a short trip from a local cheesesteak.



Reem's Steaks is open 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday.
70 Moraga Way Orinda, CA 94563, (925) 253-2004

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

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Business Bites

Compiled by Vic Ryerson

I Can See Clearly Now

Dominic O'Donovan is opening a local Fish Window Cleaning franchise. The St. Louis-based company is the largest window cleaning franchisor in the country, with more than 250 franchisees nationwide. To find out more about the offerings of the new business locally, check it out at www.fishwindowcleaning.com/3156, or call (510) 228-4949

BevMo Will Cut a Ribbon and Break a Bottle!

As previously reported, BevMo is opening a new store at 3590 Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette on July 28. The 4,600-square-foot store, the company's 10th in the East Bay, is smaller in scale than its typical locations, but nonetheless packed with wines, beers, liquor and other fine fare. The ribbon cutting ceremony will be held from 4 to 6 p.m., with a traditional "saber" of a

bottle of champagne at 5 p.m.

BevMo! will hire 14 people to handle operations at the store, with more to be added during the holiday season.

Kudos to Broker

Dana Green of Pacific Union International, the nation's ninth largest residential real estate brokerage, has been honored as one of 250 top real estate professionals and teams nationwide in sales volume. Green also ranks 31 among the top 50 professionals by sales price. The rankings were made by REAL Trends Annual The Thousand.

Chamber Music Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

www.lafayettechamber.org (925) 284-7404

The Ten Chamber Mega Mixer will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, July 28 at the Pleasant Hill Community Center, 320 Civic Drive, Pleasant Hill. Contact the Chamber for details.

Moraga Chamber of Commerce

www.moragachamber.org (925) 323-6524

Don't miss the Chamber Mixer from 5 to 7 p.m., August 16, Beer at the Bruns/Cal Shakes. RSVP by August 10. For more info call (510) 548-3422 x118.

The Chamber/Community Barbecue is at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 23. Sponsored by Safeway. RSVP to kathe@moragachamber.org.

Orinda Chamber of Commerce

www.orindachamber.org (925) 254-3909

If you have a business brief to share, please contact storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com.