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PHOTO BY MIKE SCOTT

Co-owner Joe Hanna stands outside the entrance to Shawarma & Shake at 7660 Auburn Road in downtown Utica.

Where shawarma and sweet meet

Two beloved menu items come together at Shawarma & Shake

By Mike Scott

As two popular menu items in the fast casual space, shakes are sweet and shawarmas are savory. So it just made sense to put the two together to form the newest restaurant in downtown Utica.

Shawarma & Shake opened April 24 from owners Joe Hanna and Scott Trendle, who own other successful businesses in Macomb County. The carry-out restaurant features a full range of Mediterranean fare along with an array of delicious shakes — not to mention a catchy new name.

All food items are prepared fresh each day with high-quality ingredients, and customers can expect to receive their meal in five minutes or less, said Hanna, who also owns the Pita Peddler in Chesterfield Township, where he first unveiled what has become his signature item — shawarmas filled with meats, cheeses and other toppings.

Trendle is the owner of Smoothies & Cream in Utica, where his signature desserts, including shakes and smoothies, have become best-sellers as well.

“We worked together a bit with our restaurants, and when this space opened up in Utica Scott was interested in putting in a new restaurant,” Hanna said. “One day we were sitting together and it just came out — Shawarma & Shake. It seemed like a perfect fit.”

Located at 7660 Auburn Road just west of Van Dyke, the restaurant is open from 10 a.m.-9 p.m. daily to serve the lunch and dinner crowds.

Although it is currently take-out only, Hanna is working with GrubHub to secure a delivery component with the online food delivery company.

Shawarma & Shake also will cater meals and desserts for large groups from business meetings to family gatherings to graduation parties.

“Fans can walk from the ball field to our restaurant pretty easily right here in downtown Utica.”

— Joe Hanna, co-owner, Shawarma & Shake

The menu offers healthy bowls, wraps and gyros along with eight signature shawarmas that include such ingredients as steak, white-meat chicken and a range of cheeses and toppings.

The chicken shawarma, for example, contains no dairy, is made with zesty garlic and is from Hanna’s mother’s homemade recipe.

Among the eight regular shake and ice cream options are a cappuccino crunch and green mint chip that are expected to be among the restaurant’s best sellers.

All food and dessert items are less than \$10 and a Super 88 combination is available that includes one of the restaurant’s eight shawarmas and one of its eight shakes along with a bag of chips for \$8.88.

“We want to be different and unique so we feel that this menu is one you can’t get anywhere else,” said Hanna, who like Trendle is a Macomb County resident.

The location is ideal to draw late-night customers from the baseball fans that attend games at Jimmy John’s Field on Thursday nights and during the weekend, Hanna said. That’s why Shawarma & Shake will be open until 10:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday nights from the late spring through the summer.

“Fans can walk from the ball field to our restaurant pretty easily right here in downtown Utica,” Hanna said.

The growing popularity for Mediterranean food is due in large part to the use of fresh ingredients,



COURTESY PHOTO

Above: A chicken shawarma served at Shawarma & Shake.

Right: The front entrance to Shawarma & Shake at 7660 Auburn Road.

the fact that such meals are healthy options and the fact that the food can be easily consumed and is ideal for takeout, said Hanna.

“It’s part of our culture in the U.S. that certain food items become a fad and we think that is a long-term thing with Mediterranean food,” Hanna said. “Plus it’s not fried food and can be a great leftover.”

The current website (www.shawarmaandshake.com) will likely be updated in the weeks and months ahead and online ordering will become available. Call 833-742-9276 (833-SHAWARMA) for orders and to learn more.



PHOTO BY MIKE SCOTT