

Kuzina by Sofia

In many ways, Cherry Hill's Saw Mill Village Shopping Center looks like a thousand other small, brick strip malls. But this international bazaar has bragging rights to a Korean, Japanese and now a Greek restaurant again (as well as a Saladworks and a coffee beanery). It's quite the culinary lineup.

> The latest addition, Kuzina by Sofia, opened in September in the location of the former Athens Café. The menu offers traditional and modern Greek dishes inspired by Chef Sofia Karakasidou's native city, Thessaloniki.


> At both a recent lunch and dinner, my dining partners and I started with the restaurant's signature chicken Avgolemono (\$2.50), a thick chicken-rice soup, zesty with lemon. For several of the American palates, it was an acquired taste. Others couldn't get enough.

> Steaming beef orzo soup (\$2.50), on the other hand, delighted everyone, with its rich broth, orzo pasta and chunks of beef, carrots and celery.

> My luncheon partner and I sampled similar salad specials: a Mediterranean combination salad (\$7.95) and a stuffed tomato combination platter (\$8.95). Plates were heaped with two whole, raw tomatoes stuffed variously with creamy hummus and eggplant spread (Mediterranean), or tuna salad (combination platter), served on a bed of Greek salad, surrounded by more pita triangles than we could eat. Fruity kalamata olives crunched to perfection; the feta was light and not overly strong.

> For dinner, we tried both classic dishes and house specialties. Not surprisingly, fish topped our favorites. We ordered *psari plaki* (\$14.95), two tilapia filets served in a tomato, dill and onion sauce. (It also comes in a white wine sauce.) A side of *briam tourlou* was a seasonal stew of tomatoes, onions, green beans, carrots, squash, eggplant and green pepper.

> The classic *pastitsio* (\$10.95) won everyone over, as well. The layered tubular macaroni and beef had a luscious béchamel cooked to an inviting golden brown. A side of *fasolakia* (green string beans), seasoned with tomato and dill, was tasty, but the beans were poorly prepped (no stems, please!).



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> Two chicken dishes - *kota sto fourno* (\$9.95) and chicken souvlaki pita (\$6.95) - also were nicely seasoned, but overcooked, leaving the chicken disappointingly dry. The souvlaki's *tzatziki* sauce, however, was amazing - fresh, tart Greek yogurt, with just the right hint of cucumber and garlic.

> Save room for baklava (\$2.75), baked right there. The triangle of flaky phyllo brimmed with nuts.

> The dining room, with its peach walls and giant sunflower painting, is cheerful and inviting at lunch, and candlelit and cozy for dinner. Service was friendly and attentive.

> Kuzina by Sofia is a welcome addition to the Saw Mill Shopping Center's international lineup.

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Kuzina by Sophia

> 404 Route 70 West, Cherry Hill.

> **Phone:** 856-429-1061.

> **Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

> **Reservations:** Yes.

> **Handicapped accessible:** Yes.

> **Parking:** Lot.

> **Children's menu:** Yes.

> **Cocktails:** BYOB.

> **On the Web:** www.kuzinabysofia.com

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