

## Gyro-Scope: First Look at Eliá Greek Taverna

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### FirstTaste

Thank God for Greek in Southern Westchester! (Picture my plate crashing to the floor with an “Opa!”) I’m over that **Lefteris-Santorini** conspiracy, where they opened practically right next door to each other. My man Rui Cunha—once behind Hartsdale’s lamented Oporto—is seeking to amend my situation with Bronxville’s **Eliá Taverna**.



Horiatiki Salad at Eliá Greek Taverna.

Wait a second...you may ask, “Is that a Portuguese guy opening a Greek restaurant?” Actually, it’s a family affair with Cunha’s Greek brother-in-law, Chef Michali (Mike) Sarris. Sarris comes straight outta Astoria, the foodie Mecca of all things Hellenic, with a CV that boasts the long-lived **Telly’s Taverna**. Eliá lines up the usuals (a clue might come from phone number, (914) ONE-GYRO), though a few specials on the menu set it apart from the gyro-spinning pack. We especially loved an almost Turcic main of imam, or baby eggplants roasted with

tomatoes, onions, and garlic, whose deeply caramelized intensity hinted of roasted meat (though it’s veggie).

Eliá’s predecessors at the site, La Lanterna, Spaghetti Western, and the unfortunately named Babbone (I always wondered, did it have a red back door?), all shared a stucco façade punctuated by grudgingly small windows. Now taller fenestration lets air into this strip-mall space, while Greek olive trees—still in transit—are planned for an outdoor vibe. Eliá, according to Cunha, is the Greek word for “olive.”

While it’s too soon for a critical review, I’ve already spotted some must-haves on Eliá’s crowded menu. I was charmed by refreshingly hand-rolled dolmadakia (stuffed grape leaves), where the leaf’s unique flavor was celebrated and the bundles arrived steamy-warm and fragile. These are miles from those soybean-oil-packed cigar butts, whose cold density speaks of months squashed in a 2-kilo can. And speaking of sex appeal, we loved fat slices of grilled halloumi, where the salty semi-soft cheese is char-fired until bursting with smoky juiciness.

At Eliá, gyros are not packed with snake-in-a-can lettuce shreds, so that the balance between pita, tzatziki, and meat remains in check. (And you actually can bite into an Eliá gyro without yanking out wads of filler.) While the gyro meat is fine, Eliá’s tzatziki is pleasingly tart—neither too dense nor suspiciously fatty. To my mind, its honest tang sets this gyro apart from clobberingly rich versions.

Though we didn’t weaken this time—our digestive organs are only so large—there are 20-odd cold and hot appetizers available, ranging from traditional pita dips (see photo) to octopus, kalamari, and hot veggie platters. Also look for souvlaki, falafel, burgers, spanakopita, char-grilled chops and kebabs - and, as at most Greek restaurants, you can expect some simply dressed fish dishes.



Skordalia, tzatziki, taramasalata and melitzanosalata at Eliá Taverna

Foolishly, we skipped dessert, though Eliá’s menu lists house-made baklava and Greek yogurt topped with walnuts and honey. And while Eliá’s beer and wine license is still a couple of weeks away (at posting time), fans of Cunha’s storied sangria from Oporto will be pleased that it’s making the trip down to Bronxville. According to Cunha, the quaff’s about to be bottled under the name Beso (Portuguese for “kiss”). Mr. Tight Lips won’t mention ingredients, though he might have been demurely threatened.