

Introducing Fast, Real Falafels To Moscow

By [Charles Shaw](#)

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David Tetro, owner of Korolevsky Falafel, got the idea of opening a cafe after trying the food on a trip to Israel. **Charles Shaw**

Do you know any good vegetarian fast food in Moscow? Didn't think so.

The search is over, and if David Tetro, owner of a new falafel cafe, has his way, you will soon be able to enjoy his crispy, freshly made garbanzo patties at stands all over the city. The inaugural Korolevsky Falafel, or King Falafel, is a modest new venture on Moscow's restaurant scene, an oasis of things cheap, healthy and Middle Eastern.

Korolevsky Falafel features freshly shaped and fried falafel, a Moroccan dish called shakshouka of eggs and tomato that tastes a lot like American chili, homemade chebureki, and bountiful hummus and salads of pickled vegetables that are piled into pitas along with the star attraction. The falafel is crisp on the outside, warm and fluffy on the inside — the delightful contrast in textures being a yawning gap to other “falafel” in the city. The hummus

and tahini are tangy, the pita soft, and the cabbage, carrots and cucumbers provide just enough zest and refreshment to round it all out. Put it in a pita for 109 rubles or a lavash for 119 rubles.

So, how will a veggie fast food stand survive in this city accustomed to chicken shwarma and mystery meat pirozhki?

Tetro says people come in asking where the shwarma is. When told there is none, many simply turn and leave, but those who stay and sample the falafel have never been disappointed, and many have become repeat customers, he said.

“It’s about real falafel, real taste and real freshness,” he said.

The idea came to Tetro, a construction engineer, last year on a business trip to Israel where he met with a client who dabbled in the restaurant business. Although himself Jewish, Tetro had never had falafel before. He sampled it, was hooked and quickly calculated that there was no decent, fast falafel in Moscow.

His brother, who works for the mayor of Tel Aviv, connected him with a chef who had won second place in a pan-

Israeli falafel competition, and he recruited him to come to Moscow for a month in the fall to finalize the recipes and the process. The chef’s own Moroccan heritage explains the appearance of shakshouka on the menu. Once in Moscow he hired two Kyrgyz women, Asel and her niece Zhibeka, to learn the recipe and work as chefs. They mix the fresh batches of falafel each morning and fry up each order as the customer waits.

Korolevsky Falafel has now been open for more than a month, and Tetro is still tweaking the menu to strike a balance between authentic Middle Eastern food and meeting his more quizzical customers half way.

Among his ideas: falafel “burgers,” falafel “sausages” wrapped in lavash, and even falafel-stuffed chebureki with tahini, which go down like dessert.

Korolevsky Falafel, 32/36 Ulitsa Usachyova. Metro Sportivnaya. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tel. (919) 964-3685, www.falafel.su.

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