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Review: Hidden Delights on the Roof at Jerusalem

By Sarah Crowther

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Make sure and save room for chocolate shkatulka pudding and coffee at the end of a kosher lunch at Jerusalem.

There is something very mysterious about Moscow's rooftop restaurants, hidden from view at the top of mammoth hotel buildings or labyrinthine shopping malls.

But perhaps nowhere is more mysterious than Jerusalem, a kosher restaurant that has the added cachet of being located on the roof of the glass-fronted synagogue on Bolshaya Bronnaya.

Hidden from view on the roof of an Orthodox Jewish synagogue in central Moscow, Jerusalem is a find for the

summer months.

Despite its gated exterior and posh Patriarch's Ponds neighborhood, the spot is very relaxed and welcoming for both Jews and gentiles alike. It serves mostly Middle Eastern and Caucasian fare, along with a smattering of Russian favorites like jellied meat kholodets and borshch.

As this is a kosher restaurant, meat and dairy cannot be served in the same dish (and should ideally be eaten hours apart), and the only animal meats you will find are poultry, beef and fish — pork is not allowed, nor is shellfish.

Jerusalem makes a nice spot for a lunchtime feast in the center of the city, with knowledgeable staff members with strong menu opinions and a handy buzzer system that lets you call for service only when you need it.

After a cold winter, salads are in abundance on the menu, so in between sips of bright green tarkhun soda and bites of imported olives, the fresh vegetable salad with crisp cucumbers, juicy tomatoes and sprigs of cilantro (300 rubles) was devoured, as was a round loaf of less fresh lepyoshka bread (60 rubles).

For mains, there was a plate of Israeli chickpea falafel with hummus (210 rubles), roasted lamb ribs in sauce with roasted baby potatoes (590 rubles) and a whole baked sea bream (550 rubles), which was perfectly cooked and served with a side of roasted tomatoes. For next time, garlic and pepper hummus would be a nice addition, as would the Israeli classic shakshuka of eggs baked in a spiced tomato sauce. If you are willing to go all out, a tray of assorted shashlik for 1,800 rubles would likely not go amiss. For dessert, the chocolate shkatulka pudding for 220 rubles and two Americanos for 150 rubles were scarfed down.

By 2 p.m. expats, Muscovites and laptop-carting freelancers were starting to pour in for lunch — I suspect they were hoping the terrace would be open, which will likely happen after May 1, the staff said. Because if Jerusalem has a fault it is not service or staff, it is decor. With the weather warming up, the walls and ceiling draped in white gauze curtains give the feeling of being trapped inside a banquet hall — or a circus tent.

6 Bolshaya Bronnaya Ulitsa. 495-690-6266.

Contact the author at s.crowther@imedia.ru

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