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Moscow Restaurants: Good Mood Food at Laflafel

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Laflafel / Facebook

Laflafel began life as a small market stall and Kosher food delivery service. Fast forward four years and several reincarnations and it's now a bustling restaurant full of zest and warmth tucked on a side street between Chistiye Prudy and Kurskaya. The wholesome eatery serves up Middle and Far Eastern dishes in a hip, minimalist interior. Think warm welcomes and hummus packed with the flavor of tahini and olive oil.

The menu is eclectic. Dishes range from traditional Israeli to Indian. A small number of vegetarian mains are complemented by a board of specials — the select menu ensuring that food always arrives at your table soon after ordering.

The soup of the day — on this occasion sambar, the south Indian lentil-based favorite — costs 170 rubles and is served in its own cast iron pot. Specials change daily: rich hummus served with pita and salad (290 rubles) and a falafel burger that will delight burger

enthusiasts and vegetarians alike (299 rubles).

The palak paneer (380 rubles) offers a vibrant pop of color to your table. A fragrant sauce made from spinach, garam masala and garlic mixed with chunks of protein-rich paneer cheese make it as tasty as it is eye-catching. Those hankering for something less heavy should try the sweet yet spicy Israeli latkes (290 rubles) — addictive little potato cakes served hot from the skillet.

Vegans are also well catered for. A favorite is Laflafel's signature Spielberg (340 rubles), a Russian-style falafel cutlet served with a generous portion of hummus and a mound of vegetables.The sparsely decorated setting is pleasantly informal: two rooms make it easy to gather with friends, or enjoy some quiet time with a book as the staff spin vinyl records in the background. Lounge at the rustic bar and sip on an iced latte or a masala tea as you enjoy the bustle around you.

It's very much a community spirit. You'll likely be served by one of the owners and on Fridays Laflafel celebrates the Jewish sabbath by baking a symbolic challah which is broken and shared with the cafe's guests.Laflafel's no frills, no fuss approach means that while its dishes are authentically exotic, they remain very approachable. We know where we will be heading for our falafel fix in future.

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