

Dr. D'Brant's Healthiest Meal on Long Island



Trodos
Mediterranean
Restaurant

Well, we can start by putting down those calorie-branded menus.

In the first annual Dr. D'Brant's Healthiest Meal on Long Island competition, Alex Lubarsky, CEO of the Health Media Group, and a panel of experts sought out the best restaurants and most beloved dishes that our home has to offer. The search was extensive; the results were exceptional. Considering that Long Island's culinary community is a tapestry of delectable regional cuisines, prepared by incredibly talented, highly rated chefs, it should have come as no surprise that choosing an eventual winner would be a tough task. But in the end, the choice was clear: Ayhan's Free Range Chicken Rosto from Trodos Mediterranean Restaurant.

Acclaimed for their authentic Mediterranean cuisine, Ayhan's restaurants have always been synonymous with quality ingredients and carefully prepared meals. Such consistency has earned them the loyalty of many Long Islanders who trust that a dinner at Ayhan's will always satisfy the senses without forcing them to sacrifice value. And Ayhan would not have it any other way. "Growing up in Cyprus, everything on the plate was always natural," he says. "That was just the Mediterranean diet." Inspired by his mother's cooking, Ayhan began his restaurant career by working his way up, learning the trade, seeing what worked, and 32 years ago, he opened Shish Kebab Restaurant in Port Washington. Soon after, Fish Kebab, known for its grilled whole fish, was opened across the street, and Ayhan's Mediterranean Marketplace & Gourmet Café followed. More recent additions to the Long Island landscape include Shish Kebab restaurants in Plainview, Baldwin, and Rockville Centre, with Trodos in Westbury rounding out the group.

Opened in 2010, Trodos continues the Ayhan tradition with a contemporary menu that reflects a commitment to both the cooking and the patrons. The charmingly warm, uniquely modern décor beckons you in, while the aromas of Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, and a host of other eastern Mediterranean regions wafting out of the kitchen entice you to stay. "All of our kitchens are open-view," Ayhan points out, "so that you can always see how we work and prepare the food before it arrives

at your table." While you wait, homemade Turkish bread, pita bread, hummus, and baba ghanoush offer a flavorful, layered taste of what is to come and further your suspicion that you are not so much eating out as you have been invited over for dinner. The realization is assuring. For once, instead of worrying about the food, you can concentrate on enjoying your meal.

The Free Range Chicken Rosto meal consists of herb-marinated, organically roasted chicken, basmati rice, and a medley of vegetables, including

broccoli, carrots, and white cabbage. "It was a delight to the senses on every level," reports Dr. Garry D'Brant, a clinical nutritionist and dietitian, a certified traditional naturopath, and a diplomate of the American Chiropractic Board of Nutrition (DACBN). "It was presented beautifully, but simply, with a generous portion size that easily begged for a leftover container." Very important for Alex and Dr. D'Brant during their evaluation of the meal was the quality of the chicken used. Murray's Chicken delivered: all-natural, certified free range, and locally raised. Family owned and operated, Murray's farm raises chickens on a natural, all-vegetable diet free of hormones, growth drugs, antibiotics, and preservatives. "It costs more to purchase, but it's worth it," says Ayhan. "Chickens raised in confinement produce excessive amounts of cortisol and estrogen due to stress, while chickens that exercise build muscle and reduce puffy fat." The result is superior flavor and a quality guarantee that the food you are eating was properly cared for from the farm to the kitchen to your table. "Considering the amount of toxins in all aspects of modern life, it is a blessing to find a restaurateur who is thinking ahead of the curve when it comes to clean food," says Dr. D'Brant. "The fact that Ayhan can offer a healthier choice to the public and make it taste so wonderfully delicious is a credit to his methods and concern for the health of his patrons." All too often, the healthier a meal is in a restaurant, the less flavor you get. Ayhan confidently demonstrates that one should never negate the other.

When the meal first arrives, the rich aromas deliver before you even have a chance to ask your server for more of that homemade Turkish bread. "Immediately you could smell the delicacy of the spices and the richness of the flavors," remembers Dr. D'Brant. "The first bite did not disappoint." Marinated for 24-48 hours in orange, grapefruit, and lemon juices, garlic, paprika, black pepper, sea salt, and onions, the chicken is then double baked to melt off fat and ensure extra crispy skin. Drip pans catch any excess fat and oil. "Over spicing and salting is a characteristic of poor quality or quickly prepared food," says Dr. D'Brant. "Ayhan's choice of sea salt should be commended." The use of citrus juices is also a healthy, natural choice that makes for a remarkably flavorful dish.

Basmati rice could not have been a better choice to complement the juicy quality of the chicken. Non-glutinous, aromatic, and slender-grained, basmati rice exhibits a sweet taste and soft texture that soaks up the dish's most satisfying flavors. As for the vegetables, that added far more than just color, they were tender, crunchy, and almost a meal in their own right. "The portion is worth every cent," points out Dr. D'Brant. "Great value and healthy food put together are not something that most diners have an opportunity to experience." Perhaps the most telling sign that we were all incredibly satisfied, as the meal came to a close, was that we almost forgot (at least I did) that we were there to evaluate a meal based on what it contributed to our health. Ultimately, we had a splendid meal with great company in a comfortable setting. What more could you ask for when eating out?

Ayhan's formula for success is relatively simple, but that is exactly why it works. Buy the best ingredients, take the time to prepare them, and establish relationships with your patrons. At the heart of it is a genuine love for food and the act of sharing it with others, and when you care about the people you are dining with, you also care about the quality of what they are eating. "We have to make our food choices work for our health, not against it," Dr. D'Brant reminds us. "Fast food does us no favors, but food that is prepared slowly and with care nourishes our bodies as well as our souls." Ayhan, his staff, and his patrons would wholeheartedly have to agree.

For more information about Trodos and all of Ayhan's Mediterranean restaurants, please visit www.ayhansrestaurants.com. Interested in participating in the next installment of Long Island's Healthiest Meal? Contact the Health Media Group at 516.596.8974 or info@healthmedia.us.

{ RECIPE }

Ayhan's Free Range Chicken Rosto ©

~ serves 2 to 4 ~

Ingredients:

1 Whole 3.5 pound Murray's All-Natural Free Range Chicken, gizzards removed
1 oz. Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Marinade:

2 Cups Water
6 oz. Orange Juice
6 oz. Pineapple Juice
4 oz. Natural Yogurt
1 TBS Lemon Juice
½ Teaspoon Sea or Kosher Salt
2 Cloves of Garlic, chopped
1/8 Teaspoon Black Pepper

Directions:

Blend all of the Marinade ingredients and soak and cover the Chicken with the Marinade in a large pot. Refrigerate the Chicken for 48 hours. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Remove the Chicken from the Marinade and place it on baking dish. Cover the Chicken with foil. Bake the Chicken for 60 to 70 minutes until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees. Uncover the Chicken and let it cool. Remove all the drippings. When you are ready to serve the Chicken, baste it with the Olive Oil and bake it at 400 degrees, for 15 to 20 minutes, until it is golden brown.

Serve on a large plate with Basmati Rice and Baby Peas and "ENJOY LIFE!"

© Ayhan's Mediterranean Restaurants



We searched far and wide, from east to west, from the North Shore to the South Shore, and found one meal worthy of the title in this inaugural competition.

By Melissa C. Navia



Trying to eat healthy when you're eating out can end up feeling more like a Herculean feat than a good idea on a Friday night. Endlessly confusing, inevitably tedious, the quest for quality restaurant food continues unabated, despite arguably mixed results. Sure, we can count calories, scrutinize portion sizes, and substitute everything at the table, but do we even really know what "eating healthy" means when ordering from a menu? Too many unknown variables leave many of us scratching our heads more and enjoying our food less, not to mention wondering if maybe we would have fared better staying home after all. So what is a health-conscious, albeit slightly misdirected, public to do?