

Max & David's: 'A Great Restaurant That Just Happens to Be Kosher'

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When Steven Katz of Elkins Park was looking to open a new restaurant in the Philadelphia suburbs, he said that he wanted to create a place where creatively made kosher food could be affordable to people from all over.

Fast-forward 16 months, and Max & David's International Kosher Cuisine, at 8120 Old York Road in the Yorktown Plaza in Elkins Park, is not just alive and well, but thriving, and continuing to expand.

It has become a kosher "Cheers," if you will, where people know your name, and a rabbi from a local shul is probably at the next table.

Katz and his wife, Robin, both 51, own and operate Max & David's, billed as "the premier kosher restaurant and catering service in the Delaware Valley" -- a bring-your-own-kosher-wine eatery with modern, contemporary decor. But, as Katz noted, it's not just locals -- Jews and non-Jews alike -- who come in for a glatt-kosher meal; the upscale eatery, under the supervision of Community Kashrus of Greater Philadelphia, has even become a destination point for out-of-town Jews from Monsey, N.Y.; Lakewood, N.J.; and Baltimore.

Keeping the new venture "all in the mishpochah" is Linda Grife's job. She's Steve Katz's sister, and serves as general manager of the restaurant, which is named, she explained, in honor of the sibling's "Zeyda," Max, and father, David, whose "souls shine down on us."

A framed picture of the two hangs just outside the door to the kitchen.

Katz said that Max was a charitable "family man," and that family spirit lives on at the restaurant that bears his name.

"At Max & David's, it's a full mishpochah experience," chimed in his sister.

From All Walks of Life

Grife, 47, is the wife of Rabbi Saul Grife of Beth Tikvah-B'nai Jeshurun in Erdenheim, whose debut rock-opera CD, "Tales From the First Book," is sold at the restaurant, alongside Max & David's logo merchandise.

She remarked that the thing she loves about the the restaurant is how Jews from all walks of life -- from Chabad to secular, Aish to Reform -- come together there. She added, with a laugh, that good fries (a customer favorite -- the "M & D shoestring fries" are a combination of Idaho potatoes, golden sweet potatoes and leeks) transcend the various sects of Judaism.

Max & David's provides "a huge service to the kosher community," commented Grife, and that service isn't limited to the Elkins Park location.

When the Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy moved to its new home in Bryn Mawr this past fall, Max & David's Food Services set up shop in the kosher kitchen on the Radnor campus, providing exclusive catering for on-site events.

Robin Katz is there five days a week, overseeing the new glatt-kosher, hot-lunch program available for students, staff and faculty in the dining commons. The daily lunch options, which alternate between pareve and



Steven and Robin Katz join in a toast with Linda Grife over their glatt-kosher restaurant, Max & David's in Elkins Park.

meat offerings, include soup, full salad bar, entree, dessert and beverages. She reported that the students' favorites are Sloppy Joes on wheat buns, hot dogs, and the pareve chocolate cake with white icing.

Back in Elkins Park, patrons can make their choice from a variety of seasonally changing menu items, including smoked beef brisket, ribs, roast duck, lamb shoulder, veal, homemade chopped chicken liver with caramelized onions, salmon and other seasonal fish. Also on the menu are several vegetarian selections, like pasta primavera and mushroom risotto.

The restaurant also offers a separate lunch menu that includes soups and a variety of salads, wraps and sandwiches. A pastry chef creates pareve desserts. Take-out is available, as is catering for holidays, football season, business meetings or shivahs.

Everything is made daily from scratch, noted Grife.

The three on-site *mashgichim* double as chefs for the establishment, which is open for lunch Mondays through Fridays, and for dinner Sundays through Thursdays.

Earlier this month, the restaurant was named new business of the year in the Cheltenham Township 2008 business recognition awards program.



The Katzes and Grife said that they look to expand even further, with the addition of Saturday late-night dinner (after Shabbat), and a Sunday brunch buffet, coming in early 2009.

The restaurant also hosts occasional cooking demonstrations in its banquet room, where guest chefs demonstrate how to make tasty treats, such as a recent Chanukah-themed session with creative takes on latkes and other favorite holiday recipes.

The room also doubles as a private-party dining area, noted Steve Katz.

Katz said that he wanted to create a place that could stand up to Center City restaurants, both practically and aesthetically.

He thinks that he's done it, since Max & David's is not just a kosher restaurant, but "a great restaurant that happens to be kosher."