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BUILDING A BUSINESS

By Mike Mitchelson

Chef David Vlach builds his catering business in large part with word-of-mouth and community outreach, with the goal of heading his own restaurant.

After toiling long hours in the restaurant kitchen, many chefs make the transition to a catering business. David Vlach is taking the opposite route, starting his catering business last summer with a purpose: "My goal is to own a restaurant, to be the executive chef," he said. "For me, catering seemed like the best way for me to put on that hat of being an owner and put myself in the position of managing all those issues of budget labor and designing the menu as well as going out and dealing with clients." Not to mention, catering events is a great way to meet potential investors.

Vlach's Custom Cuisine Catering handles all manner of events, from the more intimate multi-course wine dinners in a client's home, to the whole-pig



Former Town Talk Diner Executive Chef David Vlach is building his catering menus with locally-sourced product, including the vegetables grown in his 750 square foot garden.

roast outdoors for a gang. (Vlach was researching the pig roast when I first called him, deciding whether to roast it on a spit or butterfly the animal). No matter the event, locally-sourced

ingredients take center stage—including, during the growing season, a significant chunk from his garden. Those ingredients

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Can anyone define what 'fine dining' means these days? Anyone? 4



Current opens in Afton, and RedRossa to cook in Bloomington. 10



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The Zakia Deli machine

By Mike Mitchelson

The Lebanese deli has been a popular lunch spot since opening in 2007. Fear not the line—it moves quickly.

It seems David Maalouf knows everybody who comes into his restaurant, Zakia Deli, which is tucked into one of many geographic anomalies of Northeast Minneapolis. Off Stinson Boulevard on Kennedy Street NE, near I-35W, the deli pulls in a monstrous lunch crowd from area businesses, their

workers hungry for something beyond the fast food choices nearby (Zakia also serves breakfast and dinner). From behind the counter Maalouf greets many of those workers by first name, picking up on a brief conversation that started the last time the customer came in, and taking notice of anything. "When did you break your hand?" he asks one guest in a cast.

Maalouf's Lebanese food, built from his mother's recipes (for whom the deli is named), is by far the most popular on the broad menu, which includes some American favorites. The online reviews

Zakia Deli | page 14



Old attitude (and owner) saves Gabe's

By Danielle McFarland

It's a return to "Original" form for Gabe's By The Park in St. Paul.

Tim "Giggles" Weiss was on his way home from junior varsity hockey practice nearly 40 years ago, thumbing it to his nearby home from the intersection of North Lexington at Energy Park Drive in St. Paul. While waiting to be picked up from a local passerby on that cold

January evening, he glanced over to the supper club that sat at the crossing, then named Connelly's, and thought to himself, "It'd be cool to own that place someday."

Eventually, he did. Weiss took over the business from former owner and current landlord, Chester Willie, after the two managed the restaurant together for just over five years. Under Weiss' lead, Gabe's By the Park transitioned into the neighborhood's sweetheart corner bar

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