

Bushra Fakier of Flavors of Morocco holds a tray of her chicken bastilla in her home.

ENTREPRENEURS

A WORLD OF FOOD

Meet 2 of the vendors serving up global cuisine at Southern Market

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From the 1880s to the 1980s, the Queen Anne-style brick building at the corner of South Queen and West Vine streets was known as Farmer's Southern Market. Designed by Lancaster's own C. Emlen Urban, the building operated as a farmers market, one of several that served neighborhoods throughout Lancaster city in the late 19th century (and into the first half of the 20th).

For nearly four decades, the building served as office space for city agencies, its future left to the imagination. On Thursday, it begins a new chapter, as Southern Market, completely revitalized and officially back as a public space. The first-floor food hall encompasses 3,000 square feet, with seating for 250. In the middle is Bar 1888, a 30-seat bar operated by Willow Valley Communities, with mixologist Steve Wood at the helm.

From any bar seat, you have a view of eight local food entrepreneurs making their debut as a brick-and-mortar restaurant. The chef vendors are part of Willow Valley's food in-

cubator partnership with Lancaster Equity and ASSETS. The idea, says general manager Mary Ellen Davis, is that vendors will have the exposure and start-up support to help them grow and launch the next phase of their businesses within 16 to 20 months. The food offerings are notably diverse, reflecting cuisine from five parts of the world, as are the extended business hours, which include Sunday.

"This will be the place to be in downtown Lancaster," Davis said.

We catch up with two of these emerging chefs, who share where and how they got started and what food



IF YOU GO

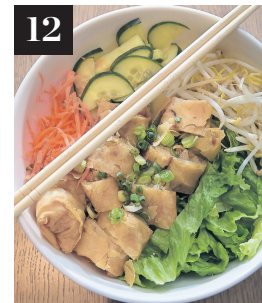
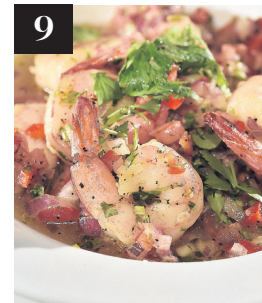
● **What:** Southern Market.

● **Where:** 100 S. Queen St.

● **Hours:** Opening day (Thursday), 4-9 p.m.; Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday, noon to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, noon to 10 p.m. Butter and Bean (coffee and tea) open 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

● **More information:** Southernmarket.lancaster.com.

1. Shish tawook from Layali el Sham; 2. Pencil with roasted potatoes and black bean and corn salad from 4 E's Latin Cuisine; 3. Braised lamb shank with quail eggs from Flavors of Morocco; 4. Maple BBQ ribs, roasted potatoes and black bean and corn salad from 4 E's Latin Cuisine; 5. Roast chicken, rice and black bean and corn salad from 4 E's Latin Cuisine; 6. Detroit-style pan pizza from Pizzeria 211; 7. Beef shawarma with fries and pickles (front) and tabbouleh (rear) from Layali el Sham; 8. Chicken tagine over basmati saffron rice, yogurt sauce and a trio of salads from Flavors of Morocco; 9. Ceviche-style shrimp salad from 4 E's Latin Cuisine; 10. Cinnamon rolls from Butter and Bean; 11. Yuca fries with chipotle mayo and fried empanada assortment with roasted garlic ketchup from 4 E's Latin Cuisine; 12. Rice noodle salad with fried egg rolls from Pho Life.



Market

Continued from E3
means to them.

Bushra Fakier, Flavors of Morocco

The Arabic word "baraka" means blessing or good fortune. But as culinary doyenne Paula Wolfert explains in her 2011 book, "The Food of Morocco," the word also has context in the kitchen. "Baraka," she writes, "can also refer to an ability to start cooking with very little in the way of ingredients and yet feed many people from the food pot."

I had first heard about Bushra Fakier last fall, something about a Moroccan with a Ph.D. in physics cooking delicious food of her homeland here in Lancaster. Little did I know that was just a fraction of the story.

Last year, Fakier created an outdoor supper club that grew wildly popular through Facebook and by word of mouth. By the time I reached her, her Flavors of Morocco pop-up had closed for the season and she was in Morocco on vacation.

When we finally meet earlier this month at her home just south of Lancaster city, we sit in a room, maybe 300 square

feet in size, brimming with Moroccan art, textiles, furniture and silver. There is color for days. When her husband Feizal comes in to say hello, she quietly ducks out without warning. Minutes later, she returns with enough food for a small village, served in gorgeous pottery and on silver trays. There is semolina soup and chicken bastiya, cookies and walnut-stuffed dates, to name just a few. She slowly pours tea (a mix of mint and thyme from her garden, lightly sweetened with honey) from a traditional silver pot, and for a minute, I forget where I am.

"Who is this magician?" I ask myself, as she tells the story of leaving Morocco in 2008 as a single mom and finding her footing in Canada, with food as the bridge.

By 2010, she and Feizal, a retired IT guy originally from South Africa, would marry and eventually have a daughter of their own. They hit the road for Lancaster in 2014 or 2015, give or take a few months, where almost immediately she started cooking again.

In 2018, she found a home at the now-shuttered Lancaster Marketplace, with a Flavors of Morocco stand. The pandemic brought her business (and

that of Pure Palate Organic, her husband's dairy stand) to a standstill. Overnight, they were both out of work.

"It was a shock that first month," she said. "I picked up some translation work to pay the bills. But customers were calling. They wanted to know if they could get some of my food."

At that point, the old farmhouse had little kitchen to speak of, so she decided to build one of her own. In the spring of 2020, Fakier raised \$3,500 via a Gofundme crowdfunding campaign to build a commercial kitchen in the dirt basement. Together, she and Feizal built it. In January of 2021, the kitchen, painted in orange, with a dreamy display of tagine clay pots and a view of the Conestoga River, passed inspection, and Flavors of Morocco was open for takeout.

With additional assistance from the nonprofit ASSETS, Fakier created an outdoor space in the backyard with covered tents, art, cushions and Moroccan music. She said people started showing up out of the woodwork and would happily wait for a table.

"It has been incredible," Fakier said. "I jumped from nothing to being the best rated restaurant in Lancaster on Google. I created something for people. They needed to get out of the house. I'm using local ingredients and making healthy food and showing people this is how Moroccans eat."

The menu at Southern Market will reflect her Moroccan heritage as well as her husband's Indian roots, includ-

ing chicken tagine, braised lamb shank, spicy chicken tandoori, potato samosas and a variety of sweets.

But Fakier wants you to know that she is not just another immigrant chef making delicious food.

"It is not just about the food," she said. "It's about healing, it's about love and it's about sharing. Through food, I want to share my culture. Being here makes me appreciate my culture more. At the same time, I want to give back to my country."

Fakier, it seems, is on a baraka roll.

Eddy Rodriguez, 4 E's Latin Cuisine

A dream fulfilled is how Eddy Rodriguez describes the latest chapter of his culinary career. After more than 20 years of cooking for someone else, Rodriguez is at last calling the shots with the opening of his Dominican-inspired 4 E's Latin Cuisine.

For Rodriguez, 42, food and family go hand in hand. Born in the Dominican Republic, Rodriguez is one of six siblings in a tight-knit family. From an early age, he had an interest in cooking, learning by his mother's side. In 1994, the family packed up and moved to the Bronx for a new life. He was 15.

By 18, Rodriguez was working in fast food while pursuing a degree in HVAC, or heating, ventilation and air conditioning. Although HVAC seemed like a practical choice at the time, Rodriguez was more interested in the heating and cooling of food. In the end, cooking would become his



SUZETTE WENGER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Chef Eddy Rodriguez of 4 E's Latin Cuisine brings Dominican home cooking to Southern Market.

chosen path. Several years working in corporate cafeterias and catering outfits led to running a Meals on Wheels program in East Harlem, where he oversaw 700 meals a day.

In 2017, Rodriguez moved his young family to Lancaster, which his sister has called home for 20 years.

"The farmland and access to fresh ingredients in Lancaster was very attractive," he said. "I like shopping at farm stands and when I have the time, I like to garden."

Here in Lancaster, Rodriguez ran the kitchen at Legend Senior Living in Lititz and Garden Spot Village in New Holland. Most recently, he spent just over a year at the Spanish American Civic Association, where he and his team prepared 400 meals a day for

three different community programs.

This new venture at Southern Market means that Rodriguez's days of cooking someone else's food are over. He's serving up a mix of Dominican classics — pernil, yucca fries, fried empanadas, to name a few — along with his own creations, including a ceviche-style shrimp salad and slow-cooked ribs lacquered with a maple barbecue sauce.

"Going out on my own has been my dream," he said. "But I don't have the \$150,000 to \$200,000 to get it started. This is an opportunity I couldn't pass up."

Opening weekend will be a family affair, with relatives traveling from New York to celebrate with 4 E's four E's — Eddy, wife Emily, daughter Edeyn and son Edryan.

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