

# ARTS+



DEBORAH VOIGT in 'Die Walküre,' Page 15

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## Chickpea Chic

Julie Wiener on the Proliferation of Hip Hummus Hangouts in New York

**K**ibbutz-born entrepreneur Zwicka Pres recently made a dramatic career change: to selling hummus from trading diamonds. Although he switched from working with one of the world's most valuable raw materials to a humble, pennies-a-pound legume, the move may prove lucrative nonetheless.

Mr. Pres's Nanoosh Mediterranean Hummus Bar, a stylish yet inexpensive organic restaurant that opened recently near Lincoln Center, has tapped into one of Manhattan's latest culinary trends: hip hummus hangouts. While Israeli food, along with all kinds of Middle Eastern fare, has long been available in Manhattan, a new brand of establishment is in-

creasingly cropping up, different from the cramped and greasy falafel shacks of yore. Call it the chic-ification of the chickpea. While remaining palatable to the budget gourmet, new joints such as Nanoosh complement their food with pleasant décor, attractive menu design, and a fresh, health-conscious approach.

So what has spurred Manhattan's latest garbanzification?

One of the coordinators of the annual Israel Non-Stop culture festival, Isaac Zarablocki, said Israelis have come to realize that "hummus is marketable." The week-long festival, which will be held at the JCC in Manhattan on the Upper West Side, begins February 28 — and includes a hummus tasting on March 2.

Until then, New Yorkers can get their chickpea fix at any number of hummus-centric spots in the city — and the offerings of many of those eateries are detailed below.

**TAIM** Hebrew for "tasty," Taim serves up delicately seasoned falafel fried to order — as well as fresh salads, hand-cut fries, and creamy hummus to about 400 people a day. While the location is literally no larger than a modest studio apartment and is counter-only, the atmosphere is something with chalk menus on walls.

Jerusalem. Since the summer of 2004, Hummus Place has been dishing up large plates of hummus (four varieties ranging from \$5.95-\$7.95), with just the right amount of olive oil drizzled artfully atop. Other specialties include *shakshuka* (\$6.95), a spicy tomato and vegetable stew served over eggs; *lebane*, a tangy cross between cream cheese and sour cream (\$2.95 for a small plate), and *kadaif*, a dessert with halva and ricotta cheese (\$3.95). It also serves Gold Star, a popular bread brewed in the Jewish state.

(99 Macdougall St., between Bleeker and Third streets, 212-533-3089; 109 St. Mark Place at First Avenue, 212-529-9198; 305 Amsterdam Ave., between 74th and 75th streets, 212-799-3335)

**NANOOSH** If Hummus Place evokes Jerusalem, Nanoosh — whose glam décor includes a custom-made glass light fixture filled with raw chickpeas — conjures up the more modern and secular Tel Aviv. Mr. Pres, the ambitious owner, said he hopes ultimately to launch a national chain. While the hummus (in eight varieties, ranging from \$6.95-\$11.95) is as delicious as Hummus Place's, healthy and organic — not Jewish or Middle Eastern — is the priority here. Falafel is conspicuously absent from the menu and sandwiches (\$6.95-\$9.25) are served in a rice-paper-thin *lavash* rather than in pita. Quinoa salad (\$3.50 side dish) and a feta-filled Greek salad (\$8.95) replace the cucumber-and-tomato salads and cumin-laced carrot salads common to other Israeli spots. Wine and beer are also available. (2012 Broadway at 69th Street, 212-362-7922)