

# To Dine For celebrates a decade in Kenberma

By Carol Britton Meyer

Longtime friends and Hull residents Paula Cofman and Rafea Cardoos fulfilled their dream of owning a business together 10 years ago when they opened To Dine For at 520 Nantasket Ave. in Hull's Kenberma neighborhood, featuring freshly made, authentic Mediterranean cuisine available for takeout and catering.

The shop's motto – “healthy, fresh, delicious” – describes the many dishes offered there, including bean and beet salads, Bulgarian feta cheese, lentils and rice, Lebanese salad dressing, kibbi, three kinds of quinoa and five of salsa, hummus, spanikopita, meat and spinach pies, tabooleh, feta and olive salad, cucumbers and yogurt, baklava, and more – many seasoned with a Syrian spice blend.

They sell wholesale to the Fruit Center in Hingham and also to Good Health in Quincy, to name a couple. They are also regular vendors at the Hingham Farmers Market. Customers who stop by the shop come from Hull, Hingham, Cohasset, other South Shore towns, and beyond, the pair report.

“We’ve always been busy, but we’re busier than ever these days,” Cofman says. Cardoos joins in good-naturedly, “We can hardly keep up!”

Both women agree To Dine For is a labor of love. “People appreciate the authenticity,” Cofman says. “Our food is fresh, real, and scrumptious.”

“Some of our customers say it’s as if the food we prepare was cooked by their own grandmother, made with care,” Cardoos adds.

The women received a text mes-

sage from a customer recently that they say touched their hearts: “Everything’s delicious. It was good to see you at the [Hingham Farmers] Market. The broccoli and cheese pies are fantastic! Everything you make is delicious. Love you!”

Whether packing up a single serving in the shop or providing food for 150 people for a special event, Cofman and Cardoos seem to take it all in stride. For example, they recently prepared 50 raw chicken kebobs for a customer who planned to cook them later and food for 150 people at a church gathering.

They both appreciate the friendly relationship they have with their customers. “They keep us going. People say they depend on us,”

The women recently leased space next door and plan to expand their business with the addition of a lunch cafe. Once it is open, customers will be able to take a break from their sometimes harried days and sit quietly and enjoy the dishes the two friends prepare.

On a recent Monday -- a day the shop is usually closed but filled with delicious aromas as Cofman and Cardoos create Mediterranean dishes of all kinds -- a couple knocked on the door. They were invited in to take a look around.

Zeina and Ned Matar, who moved to the United States from Beirut 30 years ago and now live in Weymouth, stopped by and made a purchase after discovering To Dine For -- which they first encountered at the Hingham Farmers Market -- was located across the street from Weinberg’s Bakery, which they had heard about and decided to check out. They were excited when they noticed the To Dine For sign not far away.

“There’s not much Mediterra-



**Farm Fresh: To Dine For owners and best friends Paula Cofman [at left] and Rafea Cardoos. [Carol Britton Meyer photo]**

nean food in this area,” Zeina said. “We really like it because it’s [tasty and] so healthy.”

To Dine For is pretty much a two-women operation, with some help from the owners’ grown children and occasionally friends during the summer. They also appreciate the support shown by their husbands, Alan Cardoos and Mark Cofman. Cardoos grew up in Lebanon and came to this country at age 27; Cofman has lived in the United States all her life.

“Rafea is 100 percent from Lebanon, and I am half Greek and half Lebanese, so we often joke that together we’re one-quarter Greek and three-quarters Lebanese,” Cofman explains.

Brooke Frechette of Flip Flop Esty discovered To Dine For when she lived in Hingham and stopped by the Hingham Farmers Market weekly during the summer “for their products alone,” she said. “Any-

thing else I bought was a bonus.”

When Frechette moved to Hull, she was delighted to see the To Dine For storefront down the street from her new home. “Their food is delicious and fresh and the store is spotless,” she said. “I now go there once or twice a week for my salsas, hummus, snacks, pita bread, and omigosh, the best Greek salad. The ladies are fabulous! We love TDF!”

While theirs is a high-energy job, Cofman and Cardoos say they could not be happier. “We love each other – and what we do. We’re best friends; we work together, and we hang out together,” Cofman says.

Cardoos’ favorite part of the job is interacting with customers and hearing their positive reaction to the food they sample and bring home with them to enjoy later. “It’s nice to see the smiles on their faces,” she says. “They want to buy some of everything.”

For more information and for shop hours, visit [todinefor.net](http://todinefor.net). **HT**