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# Denton Record-Chronicle

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## Business

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Tim Raietparvar owns the Pita Pit in Denton. The restaurant is located at 105 Ave. A. Raietparvar previously owned gas stations in the Denton area.

# Persevering with pitas

Restaurateur left 'easier' world of gas station ownership

By Karina Ramirez  
Staff Writer

It's a small restaurant off Fry Street combining a bit of American cuisine with some Greek.

It's called the Pita Pit, and with the motto "Fresh thinking, healthy eating" comes a menu offering grilled meats, zesty sauces, fresh vegetables and a pita rolled into a unique package.

"We don't cook anything [when customers order]; everything is ready to go," said Tim Raietparvar, owner of the 900-square-foot restaurant space. "Everything is in front of you, so you can pick and choose.... We add our own seasoning, and then you have the vegetables right in front of you to choose from."

Raietparvar, 44, said he wanted to be in a business that would provide people with a more healthy option — something other than the typical fast-food restaurant that carries hamburgers or pizzas.

The Pita Pit offers pita sandwiches, gyros and a famous ham-turkey-bacon club.

"My brother owned a Pita Pit in California, and he told me about it," Raietparvar said. The company is based in Ontario, and its U.S. headquarters

are in Idaho.

Raietparvar bought the Denton Pita Pit in 2007 after mother owner ran it for about a year. Raietparvar spent many hours learning — not enjoying any honeymoon period.

"This was a new business to me. The guy who used to own it before was not here, and the employees were running the business at the beginning, so a lot of them quit," he said. "Not only did I have to learn a new business, but make sure I learned it myself and start with new people."

Before buying the Pita Pit, Raietparvar owned several gas stations in the Denton area.

He says running a gas station is different than a restaurant.

"In a gas station, you have several businesses in one — you have food, beer, gas, soft drinks. This is all different than the restaurant I have. [The gas station] was much easier," he said.

For the first three weeks of his new business venture, Raietparvar said, he only slept for three hours each night as he learned the inner workings. His wife, Sharzad Yousefi, said it took him about a year to learn how to run the restaurant.

Three years later and now with the help of 10 to 13 part-time employees — mostly college students — and two full-timers, Raietparvar and Yousefi say they enjoy serving loyal customers who travel from as far away as Mesquite to get his pitas.

"It makes me happy to see people eat-

ing healthy food — much more than selling it to them," Yousefi said. "They are trying out a more healthy option."

After learning the business, Raietparvar found some guidance with the help of University of North Texas students.

He learned that Audhesk Paswan, a professor in UNT's Department of Marketing and Logistics in the College of Business Administration, assigned his students market research projects that analyze businesses. He signed on to be a guest speaker and see what they could discover about his restaurant.

"He was interested in finding out how to compete better with the other businesses on Fry Street," Paswan said. "He came to our class, talked about his dreams, goals and aspirations of running a business, and the students liked it. We worked on the project and collected the data.... It was free, and it was a class project for students to learn how to do research about a real-life situation."

Originally from Iran, Raietparvar is a UNT alumnus. He received his bachelor's degree in biology in 1987, the same year he moved to Denton.

Working with Paswan and the uni-

*"It makes me happy to see people eating healthy food — much more than selling it to them."*

— Sharzad Yousefi

versity has allowed him to give back to the community by working with students who learn about the reasons he launched his family-owned business, he said.

Yousefi, who works at the Pita Pit, said their two girls, ages 8 and 9, are also in tune with what is happening there.

"They come in and ask how business is going," she said. "They want to help, but I don't let them."

In the summer, the Pita Pit will expand when it takes over the space next door.

"We will take out the wall and work on that site," she said. "It will be one Pita Pit."

Raietparvar said that as he expands his business — and possibly opens other restaurants — he will make sure they are environmentally friendly.

"Everyone has to do their share," he said.

The Pita Pit is located at 105 Ave. A in Denton. Business hours are 9:30 a.m. to 3 a.m. daily. For more information, call 940-484-7482.

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