

# Moroccan restaurant offers exotic cuisine

By WILLIAM TAGGART  
Staff Writer

The exotic taste of Moroccan cuisine has come to Chapel Hill.

The Casablanca Moroccan Restaurant, which opened three weeks ago in Glenwood Shopping Center on Highway 54, offers authentic Moroccan food, atmosphere and service, said Jamal Alavie, manager of Casablanca.

There are only about a dozen authentic Moroccan restaurants in the country, Alavie said. He said the owners chose the Chapel Hill location because of its access to Durham, Raleigh and Research Triangle Park. They considered Raleigh as a site, but Alavie said the city was already saturated with restaurants.

Because they are so hard to manage and operate, there are few Moroccan restaurants, Alavie said. Highly skilled chefs and waiters are needed to make the restaurant authentic.

Casablanca's chefs are all from Morocco, he said. The executive chef has had over 40 years of experience in preparing international cuisine, with his specialty in Moroccan food. One chef's only duty is to prepare the homemade pastries that are part of every meal, he said.

The menu offers a choice of three seven-course meals at fixed prices. There is a choice of several entrees for each meal, and prices range from \$18.95 to \$23.25.

Alavie said the prices are not expensive when one considers that the customer gets a seven-course meal. A less expensive lunch menu also is available.

Included in the price of the meal is entertainment — nightly belly

dancing that Alavie described as "very clean and exotic."

To help create an authentic Moroccan atmosphere, most of the waiters at Casablanca are from the Middle East. Some are Moroccan, while others are from Iran, Libya and Algeria, Alavie said. Many of the waiters are former UNC students, and some currently are doing post-graduate work at the University.

The waiters use a special serving process that is distinctly Moroccan, Alavie said. This includes a washing ceremony where the waiter washes the hands of the customers. This ceremony is necessary because the food is eaten with fingers, he said.

Joseph Etheridge, a junior business major from Raleigh, is the only American-born waiter at Casablanca. He knew Alavie from a previous restaurant job and was offered a waiting position when the two men met by chance several months ago.

Etheridge said he enjoys working at Casablanca because he meets people from different countries and has a chance to learn about their different cultures.

He said the customers have had a very favorable response to the special service they receive from the waiters. The waiters do not simply bring the food out; they interact with the customers, Etheridge said. "It shows you're putting an effort into the service," he said.

The customers also like the authentic Moroccan atmosphere, he said.

Alavie added that all the furnishings and decorations are imported from Morocco.

"Business has been very good for



DTH/David Minton

**A waiter serves customers at Casablanca Moroccan Restaurant**  
Casablanca's most effective advertising has been word-of-mouth, and people from all over North Carolina have come to the restaurant, he said. Depending on the public's response, two or three more Moroccan restaurants may be opened in the future, Alavie said. Charlotte and Atlanta are possible locations.

## USAir to shape new fleet out of airline merger

From Associated Press reports

WINSTON-SALEM — USAir Group Inc. chairman Edwin Colodny faces the challenge of combining three airlines, three labor pools, three training standards and 11 types of airplanes in merging with Piedmont Aviation Inc., a Piedmont executive says.

The U.S. Department of Transportation unanimously approved the \$1.59 billion merger Friday, over the objections of an administrative law judge. USAir hopes to close the deal Wednesday.

The department focused its review of the merger on Piedmont and USAir, but a third company, Pacific Southwest, is also part of the jigsaw puzzle created by Colodny.

A Piedmont executive, who spoke to the Winston-Salem Journal on the condition that he not be identified, said Colodny must rid the airline of problems, such as huge inventory costs, that come from

trying to maintain a fleet of such variety. That means Colodny will probably sell certain planes and buy others to make the airline's fleet more uniform, he said.

"To make all those fit and run like a Swiss watch," the executive said, "is where the money is going." Piedmont has the industry's largest fleet of Boeing 737s. USAir flies DC-9s, Fokkers and 737s. Pacific Southwest, known as PSA, flies MD-80s, DC-9s and the smaller BAe-146s.

The task of shaping a new fleet will strain USAir's strong balance sheet and create an additional need to train pilots, flight attendants and mechanics, the executive said. That bodes well for Piedmont employment in the Triad and could lead to an increase in traffic coming through the Thomas D. Davis training center, he said.

Piedmont's maintenance facility in Winston-Salem is probably secure for several years.

"Right now, they're going to need every facility they have," the Piedmont executive said.

On Aug. 24, an internal Piedmont memo said the company was confident that no full-time or part-time agents on the payroll as of Aug. 1 would lose their jobs, but there will be relocations.

Since USAir will keep its headquarters in the Washington area, analysts expect to see cuts mainly among Piedmont's management personnel.

Piedmont will remain an independent company owned by USAir until next fall, months after USAir's deadline of Dec. 31 for absorbing the last of PSA's 700 pilots into its system.

USAir has already borrowed heavily to finance its acquisitions and aircraft purchases. In addition, it issued 10 million shares of new stock in May for about \$45 a share. USAir's stock, a victim of October's

stock market fluctuations, closed Friday at \$31.25.

Analysts say that despite operational problems, the merger is bound to enhance USAir's competitive position.

Louis Marckesano, an analyst with Janney Montgomery Scott, said that by channeling some Piedmont travelers through USAir routes, the enlarged system will be stronger than just the two companies combined.

USAir and Piedmont each run a highly regarded yield-management system that uses a complex pricing structure to extract the maximum revenue from passengers. Airline Economics, an industry consulting firm, said that USAir's and Piedmont's strength are comparable in this arena to much larger airlines.

"Size alone is not the greatest criteria for survival," said Lee Howard, Airline Economics' executive vice president.

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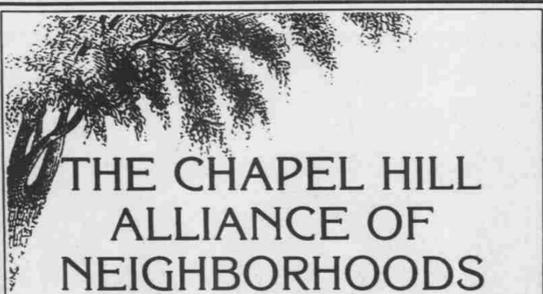


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