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THURSDAY, APRIL 26, 2007

## Saca's Mediterranean Cuisine

This will be a first in my blogging. Whenever I'm back in Claremont, CA, I try to have lunch at Saca's. They have the best falafels I've ever tasted. I've had them in Iowa and at the Farmer's Market in West L.A. and in Istanbul, Turkey. Saca's, for my money, are the best. It may be the extra gourmet sesame sauce on the side. Every bite has to have extra until it drips down my hand.

We go way back with Mr. and Mrs. Saca. Their original restaurant was in "lower Claremont" in a shopping center near my workplace, Vista School. I got in the habit of visiting them at least once a week for their falafel sandwich. We have been vegetarians for a long time now and chick peas or garbanzos are a staple for protein. They are also great sprinkled over salads. Mr. Saca always had an encouraging comment as he worked and managed the "helpers" he currently employed. His son, at the time in high school, was usually at the cash register. He was bound for college and papa was proud of that. He liked to employ local college students and was just concerned that he couldn't keep the "good ones" very long.

I remember when he made the risky decision to move to "The Village" in Claremont. He was worried because of the increased rent, but he knew that was where the future of his growing business would be. It was closer to the college campuses, walking distance for most. He and his wife are always there. That is part of it. He has built his business not only on good food but personal contact and care. It is usually very busy at meal times and his only lament is that he can't get away, say to visit his homeland. He was very interested in our cruise. He would have to close up for a couple weeks or so and he just can't do that now.

Other treats on his menu for me are: Hummus, Tabouleh and Baklava. Hummus is, again, made from garbanzos and spices topped with paprika and olive oil. Tabouleh is a salad of freshly chopped parsley, diced tomatoes, green onions,

cracked wheat and blended herbs. Baklava is made with baked filo dough, walnuts and pistachios and honey. Very sweet. I'm sure most people who keep coming back there have his combo plates of Chicken, Beef or Lamb Shawerma which are flame skewered on a rotating vertical spit. He has rotisserie chicken and pita sandwiches galore. I've tried the Dolma and Baba-ghanouj but not as much. Dolma is vegetarian grape leaves, rice and spices. Baba-ghanouj is a dip of roasted eggplant flavored with olive oil and spices. Tables are small and it is crowded. Not much ambiance but that is just fine for a busy lunch crowd. It can get noisy. It is always clean and neat.

Bob! gives this restaurant in downtown Claremont, Ca "A Full - **5 Life Preservers**" our highest rating. Visit it soon, for your health. Bob!