

Dining Out

Aegean Restaurant

257 Cochituate Road, Framingham

508-879-8424

www.aegeanrestaurants.com

Open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday, noon to 10 p.m. Sunday; lounge open seven days until 1 a.m.

Reservations accepted for parties of four or more
Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express accepted

Accessible to the handicapped

The new Aegean Restaurant in Framingham has certainly achieved what it set out to do when it took over the former Chi Chi's restaurant on Route 30 and more than tripled its size, from 90 seats at the former Beacon Street location in Framingham to between 350 and 400. With a modern, airy decor and a large bar with comfy chairs and three plasma flat-screen TVs, the Greek restaurant impresses. And since its opening in late October, it has attracted a nonstop crowd hungry for good restaurants in the area that aren't part of a chain.

A staple in Framingham for 23 years, the Aegean continues to serve all of its standard fare, from spinach pie to souvlaki, and on two recent visits we found the quality of the food to be virtually unchanged — solid and dependable.

"For years, [the owners] wanted to be in a more visible, larger location," explains Adam Dossas, general manager. "At the old place, there was always a long wait and parking issues, so it was a smart thing to do." Another impetus was the success of Aegean's Watertown location, which opened four years ago.

On a recent, bitter-cold afternoon, a couple of our companions were pining for soup and tried two Aegean classics: the Avgolemono, chicken, egg, and lemon soup (\$4). It was light, creamy, and lemony — no complaints there. The Fasolatha, navy bean soup (\$4), was robust and had a nice texture, but it was a little bland. The spinach pie appetizer (\$7) was a generous-sized portion and stuffed with plenty of spinach and feta cheese in flaky filo dough triangles. And we couldn't resist the seasoned oil and feta dip that came with pita bread while we were waiting for our meal.

The shrimp kabob (\$11) was good, but nothing extraordinary. The shrimp was seasoned, grilled, and skewered between peppers, onions, tomatoes, and mushrooms and sprinkled with bread crumbs and olive oil. We found the dish a little skimpy on vegetables, and one member of our party was dismayed to learn that unlike at the previous location, she no longer had the option of a side of half potatoes

and half rice pilaf. She opted for the boiled potatoes, which had a pleasant lemon flavor.

The gyro sandwich (\$9), lightly seasoned lamb and pork served with chopped lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and tzatziki sauce and rolled in pita, was filling, but the pork was a bit on the fatty side. However, we loved the sauce spread inside, which was a tangy blend of cucumber, yogurt, and garlic. Our hands-down favorite was an outstanding Greek salad with lobster meat (\$14), loaded with big chunks of lobster, plenty of feta cheese, and, of course, the usual cucumbers, tomatoes, peppers, onions, and olives.

Aegean's new location also boasts two function rooms that seat about 160, and they are already booking weddings, christenings, and other parties, according to Dossas. Both rooms have outdoor patios for summer seating. Plans are in the works to add entertainment to the lounge area, he says.

The Aegean has also added 25 new appetizers and entrees with an emphasis on fresh seafood dishes, which will be well worth checking out. While it's a safe bet you'll still encounter a wait, the lounge has a nice ambience and plenty of room to sit.

ESTHER SHEIN