

CARRYOUT PICKS

When it comes to fueling the everyday work world, the carryout is king. These little shops—tucked inside office buildings and commercial strips—fill a vital niche, whether it's a sandwich at your desk, a salad in the park or a candy bar at 4 p.m. Like sensible shoes, these businesses get the most use but the least attention, particularly compared with sleek restaurants and serious food. With our new "Lunch Break" column, we'll be featuring in each issue a local carryout or cafe, the type that sells personality with the potato chips.



LUNCH
BREAK

Lilit Cafe, Bethesda

What to expect: The place is like a minimart on steroids. In addition to a sophisticated selection of salads, wraps and paninis, the cafe features a beer and wine shop, monthly wine tastings, a gelato counter, a cigar humidor, cafe seating and a flat-screen TV with Wi-Fi. What's more, there's a gluten-free menu and lots of gluten-free desserts, courtesy of Sweet Sin Bakery in Baltimore. All this, plus a candy counter stocked with Tums.

Meet the owner: That friendly guy orchestrating the orders is Davinder Singh, 42, who has worked in food service operations all over the world. Among the gigs, he trained at a five-star hotel in his native New Delhi, ran a catering business in Miami, managed restaurants

in South Beach and worked for Celebrity Cruises. Singh moved to the Washington, D.C., area five years ago and has been general manager for three restaurants. Always wanting to own his own place, he opened Lilit Cafe in 2007. Singh lives in Gaithersburg and works 14-hour days, six days a week. The secret to his schedule: He's single.

Food finds: Wow, great pizza—with a thin, cracker-like crust and out-of-the-ordinary toppings. The crab cake is the signature sandwich, and it's a flavorful, loosely-packed rendition with respectable pieces of crab. One word of warning if you get the crab cake to go: Ask for the coleslaw in a separate container, so the dressing doesn't soak the sandwich.



Vital statistics:

7921 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, 301-654-5454
Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Seating: yes
www.lilitcafe.com

Have a favorite lunch cafe or carryout? Send the name and address to: lunchbreak@bethesdamagazine.com. No restaurant chains, please.

—Carole Sugarman