

## LOCAL

# Yemeni coffee shop Moka & Co. opens in downtown East Lansing



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**EAST LANSING** — The area's first Yemeni coffee shop recently opened off East Grand River Avenue, bringing desserts and drinks flavored with cardamom, ginger and cloves to the city's downtown.

Moka & Co. opened in mid-December in a bright, open, 2,700-square-foot space at 565 E. Grand River Ave. Owner Ahmed Sufyan, a plastic surgeon who practices in East Lansing, plans to open two more locations in Greater Lansing in 2024.

"The plan is to have one open up in Okemos in the next couple of months and one in Bath Township in another six months," Sufyan said.

The business offers a "very unique style of coffees," Sufyan said, teas, specialty drinks and pastries.

## Bringing Yemeni coffee, tea to East Lansing

One of the things that makes Yemeni coffee drinks unique is the light roast of the beans used to make them, Sufyan said, making the drink less acidic.

"Sometimes there are certain drinks where the coffee is not roasted so that you can taste the full flavor of the coffee bean," he said. "We have a drink that incorporates the husk or the dried fruit of the coffee bean. A lot of times people who have never had anything like this, I tell them, 'This is akin to a wine tasting.' You go in, you

have different coffees prepared in different ways. The roast is not overwhelming so you can actually experience the flavor of the coffee bean."

The menu features maleki, a coffee drink made with coffee husks, cream, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom and honey, and "Shai Yemeni," a black tea with cloves and cardamom.

There are familiar treats, including croissants, cheesecake and others, including sabaya twist, a traditional Yemeni cake with cream cheese and milk cake.

## **Two more locations are planned**

Moka & Co.'s interior is decorated with murals created by local artists. The space can seat more than 75 people. The aesthetic was chosen to appeal to Michigan State University students, Sufyan said.

"It's a really unique space and I think it's unique in the sense that the ceilings are very high and we did a very modern take," he said. "In a lot of coffee shops, it's dark and gloomy, and that's great for some people, but students want a nice, bright atmosphere. We decided to make it a very modern, very open space."

The location employs a handful of full-time staff and about a dozen part-timers.

Sufyan said he plans to open in Okemos in a 2,000-square-foot space at 4738 Central Park Drive within the next few months. A third location, which will feature a drive-thru pick-up window, is planned for a 2,500-square-foot space at 16820 Chandler Road in Bath Township, he said.

"That one we're still in the construction phase and we just pulled permits," Sufyan said.

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