

# Mad Greek eateries expanding in Salt Lake Valley

**By Debbi Taylor**

*The Enterprise*

Demand for Greek cuisine in a fast food format is on the rise in the Salt Lake Valley, putting Mad Greek restaurants in expansion mode.

Mad Greek made its debut in Salt Lake City at 4500 S. 900 E in 2002 and two more restaurants — at 171 N Redwood Road and 2100 S. 50 E. — were built in 2003 and 2004. In August, owner Jerry Tzakis opened his fourth fast food Greek restaurant across the street from Salt Lake Community College at 4700 S. Redwood Road, and is currently preparing for two new locations, one in an existing building in Kearns at 5400 S. 3965 W, and one that is currently under construction in Draper at 12300 S. 600 E.

“The Kearns restaurant should be open in March and the one in Draper should be open on or before the end of May,” Tzakis said. “The Draper restaurant will be our largest, with 3,000 square feet, because I felt that location would need more capacity.”

All of the other Mad Greek restaurants are about 2,000 square feet and offer dining for 54 people inside as well as a drive-through and walk-up window for service to go.

Tzakis, a native of the Greek island of Cephalonia, has a long history of introducing Americans to authentic Greek food. In 1959 he introduced the gyro to the United States with restaurants in Chicago and New York. In 1977 he came to Utah and opened the Hellenic House restaurant in Salt Lake City. The restaurant closed in 1987.

Mad Greek is the fast food spin off of his established Hellenic House menu.

“The fast food style concept is what people want,” Tzakis said. “It meets their way of living and saves the consumer time and money for the service and food.”

The Mad Greek menu offers more than 30 items, each prepared fresh daily and served within one to three minutes from ordering.

“I have 30 gourmet meals here; normal fast food restaurants

can't handle that kind of volume,” Tzakis said.

Each restaurant has six to seven employees who make the food with Tzakis being the master chef creating the recipes and menus.

In addition to a variety of Greek gyros, the restaurant also offers 18 dinner platters that range from baked meatloaf to marinated pork served over rice. Other menu items include fish, shrimp, chicken, Souvlaki, lamb shank and spaghetti, hamburgers, steak and a breakfast menu.

“I give the best quality and quantity of food and the best pita bread, which comes directly from Chicago,” Tzakis said. “Having these restaurants helps me carry my Greek heritage with me all the time.”

Once the Salt Lake Valley restaurants are more established and organized, Tzakis said he will look at franchising the Mad Greek concept throughout the country.