



KAREN HARTSHORN displays some of Wee B. Smoken's famous ribs inside the restaurant at 2441 N. 11th St.

JOSH WOLFE/DN

CATHY LEHN, left, chef Nader Farahbod and Brent Farahbod gather around a table at Billy's, 1301 H St. This quaint and comfortable restaurant ranked at the top for food quality.

SHARON KOLBET/DN

Feasting

Lincoln's restaurant scene offers some diamonds in the rough

BY **J.J. HARDER**
Staff writer

It's finally over. After a year of trying to eat at every restaurant in Lincoln, I've finally done it.

That's right. I ate at every single place in town. Bars, buffets, cafes, lounges — any establishment that serves food — I've been there.

I don't exactly know why I started this mission, but I completed it nonetheless. Sure, it was a good amount of money injected into the Lincoln economy, but I received plenty of benefits in return.

I discovered some great parts of Lincoln I didn't know even existed. I met some interesting people. And I enjoyed some great meals with friends.

And now I will do the honorable thing and share the wealth I have gained from this "I-have-no-life" experience. I will give you my opinion on those select places each of you must visit before leaving Lincoln.

Keep in mind: No national or regional chains are covered in this list. Yes, I still ate at one location of each of them, but national restaurants lack the character of local eateries.

And that's really what true dining is all about. Not just the food or the service, but the atmosphere, personality and intangibles that give the restaurant its identity.

So if you want to get out and taste a little bit of what Lincoln has to offer, then at least give my favorites a shot.

Ali Baba Gyros, 112 N. 14th St.

Inside you won't find much: a few Husker football posters, a television turned to "Headline News" and a big chalkboard menu. But you'll also find three of the nicest guys in Lincoln.

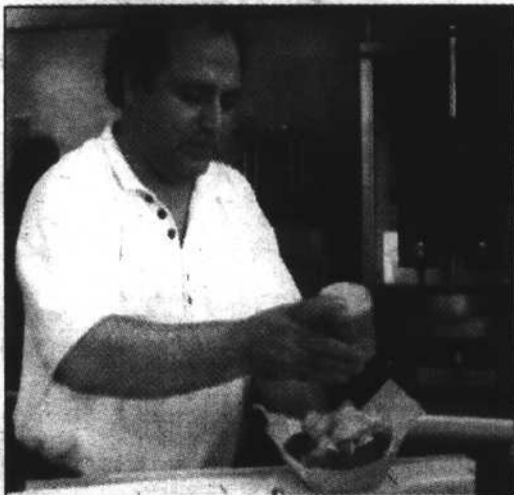
And they work harder than anybody in town just to serve up your gyro and fries. The gyros are by far the best in town, but try their chicken kabob sometime just for a change.

Wee B. Smoken, Suite 1, 2441 N.

11th St.

When renowned blues star B.B. King came to town, only one restaurant catered for him and his crew — Wee B. Smoken. Barbecue and the blues go hand in hand, so King's choice solidified Smoken's status as the best barbecue in town.

Inside you'll find the classic red-and-white checkered tablecloths and some great food. I rec-



NATE WAGNER/DN

ALI BABA GYROS' owner, Naqibullah Attale, prepares a Spanako pita, one of the many pita and gyro choices available at the restaurant. Ali Baba, 112 N. 14th St., has been noted for its service. Attale, who has owned the store since 1990, said the store gets its name from Ali Baba, the Robin Hood of the Middle East.

ommend the barbecue chicken sandwich with Uncle Alan's Taters. And don't forget your free dish of ice cream.

Billy's, 1301 H St.

The lore surrounding this restaurant says it was once owned by famed Nebraska orator William Jennings Bryan (William — Billy's, get it?).

Regardless of its history, I bill it as the No. 1 place to take a date. It's quaint, affordable and out-of-the-way — quiet, but still close to all the downtown activities. And it's not packed with a two-hour wait like the newest flashy places in south Lincoln.

Billy's serves continental cuisine on a changing menu by one of Lincoln's only authentic cooks, chef Nader Farahbod.

"Our food isn't really fancy, with lots of extra sauces and decorations," Farahbod said. "We have wholesome food with the best ingredients and a



Lincoln

Top 20 "Best Of..." in Lincoln

- Best Buffet: Mr. Panda
- Best Place to Take Your Grandad (tie): Farabee's, The Pantry
- Best Place to See Some Shady Characters: Tam O'Shanter
- Best Mexican: La Paz
- Best Music: Mazatlan (Mariachi Bands!)
- Best Chinese (tie): Egg Roll King, Windchimes
- Best Chicken Strips: Gourmet Grill
- Best Place to Have to Speak Another Language to Order: La Mexicana
- Best Bar Food (tie): Beacon Lounge, Matt's Bar
- Best Seafood: Inn Harms Way
- Best Place to Find Bikers and Businessmen at the Same Time: Duggan's Pub
- Best Place to Talk to a Trucker (tie): Virginia's Traveller's Cafe, T&R's Garden
- Best Fried Chicken: Lee's
- Best Lighting: The Oven
- Best Place to Talk About NASCAR: Tina's Cafe
- Best Wings: Watering Hole
- Best Place for Women to Have Lunch: White House Tea Room
- Best History: Engine House Cafe (It was a real Havelock fire engine garage)

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