



SETAARA / ABDULLAH PANAH

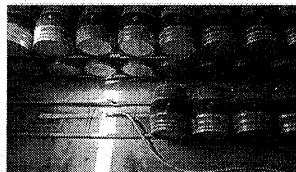
The multilevel rear courtyard at Setaara in Atlantic City is meant to evoke a Moroccan riad.

I don't often revisit a Jersey Shore restaurant after summer. But Setaara in Atlantic City is a worthy exception. I savored the Afghan cuisine we got for takeout in June, and have been thinking about the juicy kebabs and pyramid-shaped mantu dumplings since. Chef Homa Bazzyar, partnered there with nephew Abdulla Panah, is a very good cook.

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HEATHER KHALIFA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The Uzbeki palau at Setaara, an Afghan-French restaurant, in the Ducktown neighborhood of Atlantic City.

But Setaara's evocative space also captured my imagination. Not just the Middle Eastern alcove booths and minaret-decked entrance across from White House Subs. I've also been transfixed by the elaborate, multistory courtyard inspired by a Moroccan riad that's risen in Setaara's backyard and featured on Instagram. The tiered arches ringing a fountain filled with rose petals, and a third-floor deck eventually to be topped by a retractable glass roof.

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The multilevel rear courtyard at Setaara in Atlantic City is meant to evoke a Moroccan riad.

It's still a work in progress, with intricate tiling and stucco set to cover the exposed wood. But at night, lit with light strings and the glow of heaters, it's already transporting. Plunge your fork into the tender lamb shank buried in rice jeweled with raisins and shredded carrots. Nibble the scallion dumplings or the ghormeh lubia red bean stew scented with cinnamon, and experience the closest thing to international travel the pandemic can offer. *Setaara*, 2322 Arctic Ave., Atlantic City, 609-246-7704; setaaraac.com



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