

# Chow down



Photos by Noah Berger / Special to The Chronicle

Falafel sandwiches like the one above are among the popular items at Amba, a kosher restaurant in Oakland that opened in December. A server prepares one of the sandwiches, right, at Amba, which also serves salads, fries and mint ice tea.



## BARGAIN BITE

**Amba:** Inspired by spots like Hummus Place in New York, which takes the lowly garbanzo bean to new heights, four partners have opened Amba in Oakland, with hummus as the centerpiece.

The foursome brought in chefs Jared Schulman and David Babani, who trained at the Jerusalem Culinary Institute, to turn out some pretty special hummus, making it daily in small batches.

It comes in four styles: topped with tahini (\$6), mushrooms (\$8), whole garbanzo beans and chopped hard-cooked egg (masbacha, \$8), or fava beans (ful, \$8) — either the purplish Egyptian variety or the more standard green. Plenty of chopped parsley and swaths of olive oil, with fresh pita, pickles and olives on the side, make for a filling dish.

The menu includes hefty pita sandwiches — falafel, of course, with hummus, vegetables, pickles and tahini (\$7), and sabich (\$7) — a roasted eggplant spread with tahini, hard-boiled egg, vegetables and the restaurant's namesake. Wash it down with house-made mint ice tea and lemonade — and maybe add a side of fries (\$3).

Sparkling salads, large enough to share, include a crispy Israeli (\$7), with cucumbers and tomatoes in olive oil and lemon juice; Mediterranean (\$8), which tops the Israeli salad with kalamata olives and a shower of feta; and fattoush (\$8), garnished with mint and house-made pita chips.

In just three months — it opened in December — Amba seems to have become a mini gathering spot for local Israelis. Anyone fond of this style of Middle Eastern food will be heading there as well.

**Note:** Amba is kosher and Sabbath-observant, which means it is closed on Saturdays.

— Miriam Morgan, [mmorgan@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:mmorgan@sfgchronicle.com)

**Amba: 6464 Moraga Ave., Oakland; (510) 339-8000, [www.ambafalafel.com](http://www.ambafalafel.com). 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Mon.-Thurs., until 3:30 p.m. Fri.; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun. No alcohol. Credit cards accepted.**