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Life Sabich

Amba's sabich is bringing a new Israeli sandwich to the people



Photo: Katie Robbins

Jonathan Wornick has a dream.

Alongside fast-casual ethnic restaurants like [Chipotle](#) and [P.F. Chang's](#), he wants to see Israeli food represented. To realize that vision, he and his partners are starting small with the recently opened [Amba](#), a kosher vegetarian café in Oakland's Montclair Village.

In addition to well-known Middle Eastern bites such as small-batch hummus (\$6) and falafel sandwiches (\$7), Amba is introducing the Bay Area to another Israeli fast-food staple, the *sabich* (\$7, pictured).

Sabich, a pita sandwich that came to Israel by way of Iraqi Jews, is traditionally a Saturday breakfast specialty, with the ingredients prepared ahead to avoid violating Sabbath restrictions. While the fillings in this messy two-hander vary by maker, one--slices of meaty fried eggplant--is constant. Recently, *sabich* has broken the breakfast barrier, practically supplanting falafel and shawarma in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as the go-to sandwich for an anytime pita pick-me-up.

The version at Amba demonstrates that the sandwich's popularity is well-deserved. Here, the eggplant is substantiated with hard-boiled egg, smooth tahini, tart Israeli salad and the restaurant's namesake, *amba*, a spicy pickled mango sauce.

Served with a side of olives and pickles, Amba's *sabich* will have you imagining that Wornick's dreams of a chain of Israeli joints will come true--and fast.

Amba, 6464 Moraga Ave., Oakland; 510-339-8000 or [ambafalafel.com](#)

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