

# Moka & Co. opens on Main St.

by Christina Zhang  
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A sign and a note about Yemeni coffee decorate the walls at Moka & Co. Tuesday afternoon. Sydney Hastings-Wilkins/Daily. Buy this photo.

In September, a new coffee shop popped up on South Main Street with a unique medley of menu items including traditional Yemeni coffee, flavored lattes and fruit refreshers. [Moka & Co.](#), a Yemeni-owned coffee shop, hopes to share the flavors of Yemeni coffee with the Ann Arbor community.

In an interview with The Michigan Daily, Moka & Co. managing partner Ahmed Alrayashi said the shop sources coffee beans from Yemen in order to support local farmers.

“We serve coffee from farm to cup, essentially,” Alrayashi said. “Our mission is to provide sustainable income for farmers back in Yemen and give the experience here of what Yemeni coffee is.”

The Ann Arbor opening marks Moka & Co.’s sixth location in Michigan, with establishments open in cities including Detroit and East Lansing. Alrayashi said he felt there was high demand for the cafe to open in Ann Arbor.

“Once you get one in Detroit, you go to East Lansing, you have to bring it to Ann Arbor simply because that’s what people ask for, especially (on) social media,” Alrayashi said. “It’s a lot of students that want something near campus. We wanted to make sure that we were on Main Street, just because of the amount of people that come into the city every weekend.”

With a number of coffee shops surrounding Moka & Co. in the downtown area, including RoosRoast, Hyperion and Cannelle, Alrayashi said Moka & Co. distinguishes itself through its Yemeni specialties and diverse menu.

“Once our guests come in, they take a look and (say), ‘Hey, this place is a little different’,” Alrayashi said. “What distinguishes us and separates us is our Yemen-based specialties. This is coffee the way the people that created coffee have their coffee. (There’s) a lot of spices in there, so you’re going to get a medium roast coffee, or even a dark roast coffee with a lot of cardamom and cream in there, so it’s a completely different take.”

In an email to The Daily, Rackham student Catreen Marji said she has visited Moka & Co. three times since they opened because she was curious about the Middle Eastern flavors highlighted on the menu.

“I chose to visit because, as someone from the Middle East, I was curious about the cafe’s focus on authentic Middle Eastern flavors and how they might reflect elements of my culture,” Marji wrote. “I enjoyed the inviting atmosphere, the comfortable seating, the cozy yet vibrant vibes and most importantly, the delicious food and drinks.”

LSA sophomore Jesse Kay McClennen visited Moka & Co. and got an iced Yemeni chai. In an interview with The Daily, she said she would encourage students to use the cafe as a study spot.

“I would recommend it to anyone who wants a nice, calm space to chat with some friends,” Kay McClennen said. “There’s some people talking, there’s some music, but it’s not super loud, so you can easily hear each other.”

Marji wrote she enjoyed both the attention to detail and quality in everything she ordered as well as the cafe’s atmosphere.

“Everything I ordered was absolutely delightful,” Marji wrote. “The **knafeh** cheesecake was a standout. It struck a wonderful balance between traditional Middle Eastern flavors and a modern twist.”

Alrayashi said the coffee has been successful among customers, including those who may be hesitant or unfamiliar with Yemeni flavors.

“We have to be like, ‘Hey listen, you’re trying out something new’,” Alrayashi said. “This is our traditional way of doing it. (If) you don’t like it, it’s risk-free. Thankfully, everybody really does love it.”

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