

Queens College – CUNY

Food Nutrition Exercise Science (FNES 104)

Assignment # 1

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Fall 2017

Part 1: Food Market Comparison  
Mediterranean Foods  
Food Bazaar

Part 2: Restaurant Meal Comparison  
Loukoumi  
Ruby Tuesday

I. Food Market Comparison – Between an ethnic market and a standard super market

The ethnic market chosen for this assignment is Mediterranean Foods. This ethnic market is located in the heart of Astoria New York, and caters to the Greek community that lives in this area. The large supermarket chosen for the comparison is Food Bazaar. This mega supermarket is located in Long Island City New York, and caters for general public.

Points to evaluate:

1. Location
2. Atmosphere / Décor
3. Organization / Kinds of food sold
4. Displays / Freshness
5. Customer service
6. Overall experience
7. Address and contact information

## 1. Location

- a. Mediterranean Foods was established in 1974 by Bill Tentolouris. This store is conveniently located in the center of the Astoria neighborhood; thus, it is easy to get to the store by walking a few blocks; however, if a person prefers to drive, the supermarket has parking to accommodate approximately a dozen cars. The store is not too big compared to other supermarkets; but carries over two thousand Greek and Mediterranean products such as cheeses, olive oil, deli meats, marmalades etc.



- b. Food Bazaar Supermarket belongs to Bogopa a privately-owned company established in 1988 that operates full-service supermarkets in the Tri-State metropolitan areas (NY, NJ, CT) under the name Food Bazaar. This supermarket is strategically located in the heart of Long Island City on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street and Northern Boulevard, which is a main road, in Queens county. This megastore is ten times bigger than Mediterranean Foods; however, it is not easy to access by walking; but it offers over three hundred parking spaces, making it really convenient for a person that is driving. Food Bazaar dedicates aisles of space to

international and mainstream groceries in order to provide each of the communities that they serve with the flavors that they need.



## 2. Atmosphere / Décor

- a. The ambiance at Mediterranean Foods is very welcoming, you can feel that it is family owned, and that it caters specifically to the Greek community. The majority of the people that work in the store, are originally from Greece or from Greek descent, and most of the time they speak in their language as the customers are mostly Greek. They are ready to help, and in fact as soon as a customer enters the store, they offer their assistance. The store is decorated with Greek motifs like little olive trees, pictures of Greek places like Santorini, and Crete, also they have Greece flags all over the store, and in the background, they play Greek music.
  
- b. The ambiance at Food Bazaar is not as warm as in Mediterranean Foods. This is a huge store; therefore, the treatment is impersonal. There are several clerks all over the store; but,

they are not seeking to help the customer, most of the time they are restocking the products that are sold out. In the event that a customer needs assistance, the customer him/herself has to look for a clerk or perhaps even look for the manager. The store is decorated with flags from all over the world and in the background, they play contemporary American music

### 3. Organization / Kinds of Food Sold

- a. The Mediterranean Foods store is conveniently organized in three major areas, at the front (main entrance) the customer can find all the packaged products such as cookies, crackers, pasta, chocolates, coffees, teas, and marmalades. The second area is towards the back-left hand side where the customer can find a rather large variety (or perhaps I should say collection) of olive oils; which are all from different areas of Greece. The third area is the deli, located towards the back-right hand side showcasing over 16 different kinds of fresh olives and 13 different kind of feta cheeses. Mediterranean Foods does not carry fresh produce.
- b. The Food Bazaar store is so big that lends itself to be organized in departments. As soon as the shoppers enter the store, they will find the produce area, followed by a built-in fish market; then it follows the butcher area, the deli, the bakery, the frozen products; then the many aisles filled with thousands of packaged products from rice to ice cream, or cleaning products to soft drinks, etc. They also carry products from all over the world, from Colombian or Peruvian products to Korean or Jamaican products. It is a large store; however, it does not have 13 different kinds of feta cheese or 16 different kinds of olives like Mediterranean Foods. It only has two types of feta cheese domestic (Wisconsin) or imported (Greece), and two types of olives, Kalamata regular or pitted.

#### 4. Displays / Freshness

- a. Displays at the Mediterranean Foods store are small; yet the variety of the products is impressive. For example, in the aisle where they display the pasta, the customer can find an assortment of over 10 different kinds of pasta, including high fiber and gluten free. In the deli area, they display sixteen different kinds of very fresh olives and feta cheese. Moreover, Mediterranean Foods carries six different kinds of store brand olive oil exquisitely displayed in stain steel containers surrounded by mini olive trees and flags from Greece.



- b. The displays at Food Bazaar are rather big compared to the ones at Mediterranean Foods. Every department skillfully displays all sorts of products. For example, in the produce area they have large displays of tomatoes, oranges, cucumbers, apples, etc., which generates a vivid and beautiful mix of colors, that invites the customer to purchase these fresh fruits

and vegetables. Another example of large displays is located in the canned products area, where the customer will find huge displays of products like canned soups, beans, tuna, etc. that are arranged in wall to wall and floor to ceiling displays.



## 5. Customer Service

- a. Since Mediterranean Foods store is small, and caters to a specific segment of the market (the Greek community), they have a very good customer service. They really make the customer feel welcome. All the staff are eager to help the clients as soon as they enter the store. The clerks are ready to answer questions either in Greek or English, and to go the extra mile in order to provide the customer with the best shopping experience.
- b. Food Bazaar on the contrary is a large store and caters to clients from many different nationalities like Americans, Koreans, Colombians, Jamaicans, Indians, Mexicans, to name a few; therefore, the business model does not allow for a greater connection with the client. Even though the staff is trained to help the customers, if a client has an issue that needs the

help of customer service to be resolved, it usually takes longer time than the customer service from Mediterranean Foods in order to get it fixed.

## 6. Overall Experience

- a. The overall experience for a customer at Mediterranean Foods is a very enjoyable one, most likely due to the personalized service. The fact that it is a small store allows this sort of exclusive one on one service that Food Bazaar cannot offer. However, when it comes to prices, both Mediterranean Foods and Food Bazaar carry similar if not the same products and in many cases the prices are relatively the same.
- b. The overall experience for a customer at Food Bazaar is rather impersonal. The store is so large that does not allow for a personalized experience. However, due to the fact that Food Bazaar goes to great lengths in order to provide each of the communities that they serve with the flavors that they love and recall from "back home." and devote aisles of space to international and mainstream groceries it is also a pleasure to shop at Food Bazaar.

## 7. Address and Contact information:

Mediterranean Foods  
Address: 22-78 35<sup>th</sup> Street Astoria, NY 11105  
Phone: (718) 728-0266  
<http://mediterraneanfoodsny.com>

Food Bazaar  
Address: 42-02 Northern Blvd. Long Island City, NY 11101  
Phone: (347) 448-8860  
<https://www.myfoodbazaar.com>



## II. Restaurant Comparison – Between an ethnic restaurant & a standard restaurant

The ethnic restaurant chosen for this assignment is Loukoumi. This ethnic restaurant is located on Ditmars, which is a main road, in Astoria New York, and caters to the Greek community that lives in this area. The standard restaurant chosen for the comparison is Ruby Tuesday, which is located in Westbury, Long Island New York, and caters for the general public.

### Points to evaluate:

1. Organization / Décor / Utensils
2. Food choices / Menu / Prices
3. Contrast of core foods
4. Contrast of complementary foods
5. Contrast of secondary foods
6. Contrast of peripheral foods
7. Contrast of preparation techniques
8. Notes about flavor principles
9. Atmosphere / Service
10. Overall Experience
11. Address and contact information

#### 1. Organization / Décor / Utensils

Loukoumi has organized the restaurant in a rather efficient way. The medium size tables (tables for four people) are placed at the front of the restaurant and up to the center. Then from the center of the restaurant and towards the back, the customers will find the large tables (tables for six or more people) and in the charming patio, they have small romantic tables for four people, which they put together in the event that they need to accommodate a large party. This cozy décor is complemented with different kinds of utensils; like for example they have two types of forks, one small for the mussels, one large for the regular entrees, two types of knives one small usually for the butter and/or spreads, and one large for the steaks, medium size glass for water (not like Ruby Tuesday that they have plastic cups for water), and glass containers for olive oil and red vinegar. The Ruby Tuesday

located in Westbury is rather large; thus, it has different areas. As soon as the customers enter, they will find a host that will guide them to their table; which is picked depending on the size of the party or the preference of the customers. The big bar -with several flat screen monitors- is located centered and towards the back of the restaurant. The booths for four people and tables for two people are located to the left of the main entrance, to the right the customers will find bigger tables for families or a large party, and the main feature of this restaurant; the salad bar, is located in the middle of the restaurant. This casual dining restaurant has a rather relax approach when it comes to utensils, they have one kind of fork medium size that is used for everything, two types of knives, one small for butter and/or spreads, and a large one for steaks, and no container for olive oil, they do have only one kind of vinegar (balsamic vinegar). They have plastic cups for water and plastic containers for ketchup, mustard, and mayonnaise.



## 2. Food choices / Menu / Prices

Loukoumi Taverna offers an exclusive Greek menu. From a tasty Greek salad, or a juicy charbroiled steak, to succulent seafood, and of course everything freshly made. For example, the Greek salad comes with delicious fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, Feta Cheese, and a drizzle of olive oil, simply Delisssh!! When it comes to the prices, the

average price per dish at Loukoumi is eighteen dollars, so basically it has affordable prices. Ruby Tuesday offers mainly American Cuisine, which includes chicken, steak, pork, pasta, soups, and seafood. However, Ruby Tuesday is usually recognized by their salad bar and hamburgers. Prices are really affordable, the average price per dish is thirteen dollars. Among all the restaurants that are in the same category, like for example Applebee's, or TGI Friday's, the best menu in casual dining, the best salads, and the best-handcrafted burgers are from Ruby Tuesday.

### 3. Contrast of core foods

The core foods at Loukoumi reflects its Mediterranean origin, this Greek restaurant offers a medium size basket with different kinds of bread, the main course can be combined with either potatoes, rice, pasta, or pita bread, and grains like beans. The core foods at Ruby Tuesday are bread, which is offered only for dinner, biscuits, baked potatoes, French fries, and pasta.

### 4. Contrast of complementary foods

The complementary foods at Loukoumi are oregano, garlic, onion, olives, dill, cucumbers, tomatoes, feta cheese, tzatziki sauce (yogurt sauce), and olive oil. Other common herbs and spices include rosemary, thyme, and parsley. The complementary foods at Ruby Tuesday are oregano, parsley, tomatoes, parmesan cheese, butter, pickles, banana peppers, chives, and a large variety of dressings, like ranch, Caesar, or thousand islands to name a few.

### 5. Contrast of secondary foods

The secondary foods at Loukoumi are fish, seafood (mussels, shrimp, calamari), grilled chicken, beef, lamb, and pork. However, the most popular dish is the grilled octopus. The secondary foods at Ruby Tuesday are steaks, grilled chicken, fish, calamari, and shrimp; however, the most popular dishes are beef burgers and turkey burgers.



#### 6. Contrast of peripheral foods

When it comes to desserts Loukoumi does not have a large selection, they only have two choices: Galaktoboureko, it is a delicious combination of creamy custard and flaky phyllo dough that is baked to golden perfection, then drizzled with a lemon and orange infused syrup. The second option is Baklava, a Greek pastry made with phyllo dough that is layered with a cinnamon-spiced walnut filling and bathed in sweet syrup. Ruby Tuesday on the contrary, has a lot of dessert options like for example chocolate cake with a melted core of chocolate, a rich and creamy New York cheesecake, blondies with chunks of nuts and chocolate chips, vanilla ice cream, Tiramisu, and gourmet cupcakes in two options carrot and red velvet topped with vanilla cream.

#### 7. Contrast of preparation techniques

The preparation techniques are similar, for example a large part of the menu of both restaurants are grilled and/or fried; however, the grill from Loukoumi is powered by charcoal, while Ruby Tuesday's grill is powered by gas, which, means that it lacks that delicious flavor and aroma that the food obtains when is cooked with charcoal. Another similarity is that a large number of items from the menu are fried, or I should say deep fried and others are boiled or baked.

## 8. Notes about flavor principles

In the case of Loukoumi, basically, the flavor principles are the ones from the Greek cuisine, such as oregano, rosemary, thyme, parsley, olives, olive oil, feta cheese, salt, pepper, cumin, cloves, cinnamon, and Feta cheese. On the other hand, the flavor principles of Ruby Tuesday, are those of the American cuisine, such as milk, butter, salt, pepper, chives, parsley, chili peppers, and ketchup.

## 9. Atmosphere / Service

Loukoumi has created an elegant yet friendly atmosphere where customers can relax and enjoy traditional Greek food. The restaurant has a rustic interior décor with Greek motifs and a rather small; but charming bar that showcases a few colorful bottles of Ouzo, the benchmark spirit of Greece. Loukoumi is a hidden gem in Astoria, it has a beautiful setting, romantic and cozy. However, it does not have private parking; hence, customers that are planning on visiting Loukoumi should allow some extra time to look for parking. The staff at Loukoumi is very friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. If a customer has a special request or a question regarding the cooking process or the ingredients of a dish in the menu, the waiters or waitresses go the extra mile to please the client, answer questions, and sometimes, give free desserts to the customers.

The atmosphere at Ruby Tuesday is casual and family oriented. The decor is a combination of wainscoting, dark-leather booths and a smattering of stuff on the walls. It seems that the owners of Ruby Tuesday want you to believe you are in a sportsman's club or hunting lodge; one with a salad bar. The restaurant location is rather large compared to Loukoumi, it has twice the size and it can accommodate approximately 100 cars in its private parking lot. Ruby Tuesday staff is mainly composed by young people; thus, sometimes they do not pay attention to details, which is not appreciated by the customers especially if part of the order never arrives and the customers are hungry. However, there is always a manager on site, who is ready and willing to help and make the customer happy.

## 10. Overall Experience

Visiting Loukoumi Taverna was an amazing experience. In a few words, this is the best Greek restaurant in Astoria. Great delicious food, like homemade with fresh ingredients and the perfect Greek flavor. The service is outstanding, all the staff is eager to help, in order to provide a great experience to the customers. I will definitely recommend this restaurant. The experience at Ruby Tuesday was rather dull, the food was not so fresh, the greens from the garden salad were withered, the burgers were undercook, and the service was rather poor, especially because the waitress forgot a very important request “no bread with the burgers” because I am gluten intolerant. I will not recommend this restaurant.

## 11. Address and Contact information

Loukoumi Taverna

Address: 45-07 Ditmars Blvd, Astoria, NY 11105

Phone: (718) 626 3200

<http://toloukoumi.com>

Ruby Tuesday

Address: 1226 Old Country Road Westbury, NY 11590

Phone: (516) 228-5176

<http://www.rubytuesday.com>