

# Centrale Bergham: fast casual restaurant chain now has 17 locations and counting

## MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN



I must say that I really do look forward to Canada's iconic Le Burger Week and for this year's recent milestone 10<sup>th</sup> edition I could not wait to study the official list of participating restaurants.

So what was my choice for 2021? Where have I yet to taste a burger before? It was so much fun to discover Centrale Bergham for the first time. Founded 10 years ago in the Petit Maghreb area in the East End, this fast-casual sandwich restaurant chain now has 17 locations and growing in Quebec and Ontario. Serving halal sandwiches inspired by different cuisines of the world, Bergham seeks to offer foods that all kinds of people, from all walks of life, can enjoy.

Upon first glance this looks like a fast food place. You order at the counter, sit down or take out. But clearly behind the scenes in the kitchen it is hardly that as everything is prepared fresh.



The Philly Steak has creamy filet mignon, mushrooms and Swiss cheese.

"We are not like Subways, McDonald's or the others," says Chief Executive Officer Assad Khan. "Everything is made fresh in the kitchen. Nothing is frozen. Our bread is homemade as well."

I went to the LaSalle location on Newman Blvd. It is a great spot with plenty of free parking. I ordered the King Burger and let me tell you folks I do not want a calorie count on this one! Served on a bun, it features a beef patty, crispy chicken, fried onions, cheddar cheese, lettuce and tomatoes. And wow was this good! Their iconic flavours and unique blend of sauces provide visitors with multiple combinations to satisfy even the biggest cravings.

Once I was there to try a burger, marketing director Hira Khan wanted me to sample a few other items which I had for dinner and other lunch periods that week.

Let's start off with the sandwiches, which took two additional lunch hours to eat. The Maximum contains Philadelphia chicken breast, two beef patties, beef bacon and cheddar cheese while the Philly Steak has creamy filet mignon, mushrooms and Swiss cheese.

Oh yes, there were chicken wings in the bag as well which I shared with a colleague in the office.

She gave them a thumbs up. Hila also suggested a poutine. That turned out to be a neat dinner side dish. They have six different kinds of poutines: chika, Philly Steak, Merguez, Le Chef, Le Rouge and regular. I opted for the latter, with French fries, poutine sauce and cheese curds.

Did I really need dessert at this stage? Why not?



The King Burger at the LaSalle location of Centrale Bergham was the author's favourite during Le Burger Week

One was the chocolate nut and tiramisu with three select ingredients. This is undoubtedly a most extravagant tiramisu. Both smooth and crunchy, crispy and sweet, you will succumb to this delicious dessert. There was also a slice of chocolate cake to enjoy.

Owned by the Genesys Restaurant Group (<https://groupegenesys.com/concepts/lokma>), which also has Mont Tacos, Lokma and Fête à Crêpe under its banner.

Locally they have two locations in Laval, five in central Montreal and one each in LaSalle, St. Laurent, Montreal North and Greenfield Park.

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## Mike Cohen experiences the lightning-fast formula at the growing Pizzeria Bros chain

Pizzeria Bros first opened its doors in Old Montreal in 2016. Since then, five others have joined the group; Downtown, Le Village, Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, Kirkland and Côte des Neiges. Owners Carl Sexton and Patrick Doigniaux are presently fielding lots of inquiries from potential franchisees. Laval and the South Shore are indeed likely landing spots.

Since Pizzeria Bros debuted on Côte des Neiges a year ago, I have driven and walked by umpteen times. I finally stopped by to sample the food and thanks to team leader Jared Maraj and his co-workers Mikael Loyat and Harjot Singh I came away with an excellent first impression. This chain can best be compared to the Subways of pizza. However in this case Pizzeria Bros provides a fresh thin crust pizza with quality ingredients in a quick service setting. The dough, sauces and dressings are all homemade and pizzas are cooked in high heat ovens in only 90 seconds.

"Patrick and I spent a lot of time planning the concept," Sexton said. "Patrick came up with the idea. He had worked at an Italian restaurant where take-out was big. When we discovered this new model of an oven that could make great quality pizza in such a short pe-

riod of time we knew it was a better alternative than a wood oven, where getting permits nowadays is not so simple."

There are appetizers, a wide array of pizzas, sandwiches, salads and desserts to choose from. Pizzas come with four thin crust options; traditional, whole wheat, keto and cauliflower. In my case there was no question of where to start and that was to select each of my ingredients. Jared made the crust and on went tomato sauce, sundried tomatoes, shrimp, chicken, bacon and of course cheese. It came out piping hot and Jared asked how many slices I wanted. I opted for eight and followed Jared's guidance with the focaccia sticks entrée. A cherry soda was the perfect beverage.

When I saw the "giant" eight inch chocolate chip cookie, I was intrigued. Jared handed it to me warm and in a small pizza shaped box and cut into eight slices.



Mikael Loyat, Jared Maraj and Harjot Singh present Mike Cohen with his Pizzeria Bros order

While I was too full to try anything else, I did take home La Tempête Parfait sandwich, containing Alfredo sauce, Mozzarella, red onions, chicken, bacon, garlic, arugula and cherry tomatoes. It was a great lunch the following day.

There is also a corporate catering menu. For large orders you need to give at least 24 hours' notice. You can order online at [pizzeriabros.ca](http://pizzeriabros.ca) or via Uber Eats. 5700 Côte-des-Neiges (RC3) Montreal, H3T 2A8.