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# The Halal Guys Is Set To Open Next Month Near Loyola's Lake Shore Campus



*Courtesy of Adri Lugosan*

The restaurant will open in the space left vacant by Five Guys last fall.

**By Leen Yassine**

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The Halal Guys, a restaurant serving fast casual Mediterranean food, is set to open in August near Loyola's Lake Shore Campus where Five Guys was previously located.

Five Guys, which was one of the few burger restaurants located near Loyola's campus in Rogers Park, permanently closed in September 2019, The Phoenix reported. The store's general manager previously told The Phoenix its six-year lease ended and they didn't want to renew it.

Dimitris Bouhoutsos, the franchise owner of The Halal Guys in the Greater Chicago Area, said the restaurant is a Mediterranean brand with zabihah halal-certified food options — meaning food which is prepared in accordance to Islamic Law. He said he decided to set up shop near Loyola (6477 N. Sheridan Road) because it's a “cool ... very diverse” area which he feels doesn't have a lot of halal-certified restaurants.

The restaurant's online menu offers build-your-own rice bowls and sandwiches with chicken, gyros and falafel, as well as signature white and hot sauces. Sides include hummus, baba ganouj, falafel and fries, with baklava as a dessert option.

Along with four other Chicago restaurants — located on West Division Street, North Wabash Avenue, in Skokie and a fourth in Countryside — The Halal Guys franchise has locations across the nation and internationally, such as in Malaysia and South Korea.

Bouhoutsos said what sets The Halal Guys apart from other restaurants in the area is it's an international brand with name recognition.

“You can travel to California and have the same feeling, or Florida, or London as another example,” he said. “We have a great brand recognition, and the brand is continuing to grow at a fast rate. This is the Chicagoland area's fifth location in a few years.”

Bouhoutsos said he plans to get involved with any community and university events he is able to and has already reached out to Loyola regarding the use of Rambler Bucks, which is money Loyola students add to their student IDs to purchase food without sales tax.

Suhaylah Syeda, a junior nursing major at Loyola, said she first heard about The Halal Guys' new location when her friend tagged her in an Instagram post. Syeda said she lives near one of The Halal Guys' Chicago locations and has eaten there many times, so she's looking forward to having one across from campus. She also said she doesn't think I Dream of Falafel (IDOF) — another halal Mediterranean restaurant near campus (6558 N. Sheridan Road) — is too similar.

“This would basically be making it a more diverse option for students that are specific about eating halal,” Syeda, 19, said. “For a lot of Muslim students it would open up a whole nother option for them.”

Adri Lugosan, a graduate student pursuing her PhD from Loyola's chemistry and biochemistry department, shared news of the restaurant in a Rogers Park Neighborhood News — a Facebook group for residents to post about neighborhood-related topics, from restaurant recommendations to crime complaints. Lugosan said she saw the restaurant while walking to a yoga class and shared the news because the location has been empty for such a long time.

“IDOF and Milo's [Pita] are so close so I thought ‘Gosh, we're getting another Mediterranean restaurant,’” Lugosan, 26, said. “And SP Kebab closed not too long ago.”

Lugosan said although she hadn't heard of The Halal Guys prior, she's interested in seeing how it competes with nearby restaurants and plans to try it next month.

Imaan Asiyah, a Rogers Park resident who heard about the restaurant's opening through Lugosan's Facebook post, said she's excited for The Halal Guys to open because she struggles to find halal options in the area. She said despite the presence of other Mediterranean restaurants nearby, she “would just eat at The Halal Guys” due to its halal-certification.

“I'm Muslim so I only eat halal, zabiha halal, so I'm really happy that I'm going to have something ... for my religious restrictions,” Asiyah, 27, said.

While the restaurant is planning on opening the first week of August, Bouhotsos said “we have to do our due diligence” given the ongoing pandemic. He said the restaurant will offer both delivery and pick-up orders in order to abide by social distancing guidelines.

“As much as I would love to do a grand opening, I don't think that's an option right now,” Bouhotsos said.



## Leen Yassine

### Copy Editor

Leen Yassine is a journalism and political science double major with a minor in Arabic. Leen works as a news reporter and copy editor at The Phoenix. Raised in Toledo, Ohio, she loves exploring her hometown's metroparks and practicing yoga.



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