



# RUDY'S MEDITERRANEAN GRILL

A TURKISH DELIGHT IN COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY ASHLI MIX PHOTOGRAPHY

**M**any people in this area would assume that to get fine Turkish cuisine, you would have to go into either Baltimore or the nation's capital itself. But in suburban Columbia, MD, Rudy's Mediterranean Grill has been serving up dishes like Grilled Lamb Adana and Turkish Doner Kebab since 2009.

Most people come for two things: one, the authentic food; and two, the chance to shake hands with co-owner Rustem "Rudy" Keskin. During a recent interview with the Beverage Journal, he proudly proclaimed, "This was the first Turkish cuisine in Howard County. We've been here 15 years now, and we have many wonderful customers."

Most articles I write, I refer to the main interviewee and others quoted throughout each feature by their last names. But somehow, it doesn't feel right with this article. Keskin is Rudy in the restaurant, Rudy out in the community, Rudy wherever he goes. So, that's



**Rustem "Rudy" Keskin**  
*Co-Owner*  
**Rudy's Mediterranean Grill**

---

how I am going to refer to him.

Rudy moved to the United States in 1998, leaving his native Istanbul where he had worked in various restaurants and food-service. He became known to many when he worked at the Double T Diner across from the old Enchanted Forest in Ellicott City for 10 years. When it came time to open his own place, he wanted all of those people he had formed friendships and relationships with to be able to easily find him. So, he named his then-new restaurant after himself, which makes him and his eatery perfect for this ongoing column spotlighting bars, restaurants, and taverns in Maryland and D.C. named after their owners or families.

"You want everybody to know your name," Rudy says. "People come to me, and I want them to come to me. They come to see me and to have a great meal. It's a way to give people my trust. Even if I moved, even if I changed locations, I would take the name with me and the people would find me."

It's the people, the customers, that are the favorite part of his work: "What I love about my job is I get to meet so many different people. You can't even imagine how

many people I've met. And you have to be good with people to do this job, because you do welcome so many. It's like nursing or [medical care]. You have to deal with everybody the same way and give them the same service."

He continued, "You also need to be patient. You can't get angry. You have to know what you're doing. You have to know so many things. Safety, service. You can't run this business if you don't know every-

thing about it. Money cannot run the business. Your money cannot clean your place or make good food for the customers. Only experience can run a business."

And it really helps to have an outstanding bar menu. Rudy's beverage selections are a veritable showcase for Turkish concoctions that most folks won't get anywhere else. A quick browse of the choices features such standouts as the Turkish Peach Martini and The Turkish Mark. The





former includes Turkish peach juice and peach schnapps and is regarded as Rudy's signature cocktail. The latter starts with Maker's Mark bourbon and includes Smyrna raki and house-made bitters.

Other drinks on the menu range from

Rudy's Ultimate Margarita to the Ottoman Cosmo to Madame Istanbul, along with a selection of Turkish beer. What is Rudy's favorite? Without hesitation, he replied, "After the meal, we make a cocktail called the Turkish Delight. It includes Godiva

chocolate liqueur, vanilla vodka, Kahlua, and fresh brewed Turkish coffee. You mix them up and put whipped cream on top with some chocolate syrup. It's very, very good!"

What is also very good is the way Rudy's Mediterranean Grill has rebounded since the COVID-19 crisis. Like so many other bars and restaurants, the business isn't back to where it used to be prior to March 2020. But it's getting there.

He said that before the pandemic, Rudy's served about 1,000 people a week. "Now we are between 700 and 800. The 200 we're missing is probably the lunch people, the office crowd. Instead of working from home, we need these people to physically go back to the office. Other than that, our dinner [service] is really good. Everybody

## UPDATES = MORE SALES

Call today for your Assessment!



- ✓ New Doors
- ✓ New Lighting
- ✓ New Shelving = More Facings
- ✓ Serving the entire Mid-Atlantic region



Like us at  
[facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES](https://www.facebook.com/CAREYSALESANDSERVICES)



### CAREY SALES & SERVICES

Serving the Local Beverage Industry since 1933

3141 Frederick Ave., Baltimore, MD

410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 • [careysales.com](http://careysales.com)



is having this same problem. But we're getting closer and closer to bringing all of the people back in."

And Rudy intends to do that by continuing to offer yummy cuisine, distinctive drinks, and stellar customer service. He concluded with advice he has taken that he offers to anyone reading this thinking of opening their own place and naming it after themselves: "You can't have a business that is beautiful on the outside, but has cancer on the inside in the form of bad food, bad attitudes. You need to run your business. You need to have experienced people. And don't burn money, and don't go with frozen. Be good at shopping for food. Go with fresh meats, vegetables, whatever you serve. The same goes for your liquor and wine. And smile!" ■



**SHOW MORE  
TO SELL MORE**

- ➔ Solid Shelves
- ➔ Maximum display  
Edgeless Doors
- ➔ Maximum efficiency

3141 Frederick Ave. Baltimore MD | 410-945-7878 or 800-848-7748 | [careysales.com](http://careysales.com)