

New coffee shop brewing in Central Square

By Cyrus Moulton / The Daily Item | Posted: Wednesday, May 20, 2015 3:00 am

LYNN — He's been on the hunt for a good cup of coffee since he first traveled from Russia to the United States in 1989.

More than two decades later, Yakov Tseitlin has found it; and has opened Cafe Moka to share a cup with the Lynn community.

“We found the one thing lacking in Lynn was really good coffee,” Tseitlin said Thursday from a table at the cafe. “Coffee should be local — like an old-time New England church, you don't drive there, you walk there, you walk to get coffee. And I didn't consider Dunkin' Donuts as a good destination for really good coffee.”

Cafe Moka opened April 14 in Central Square at the former location of Turbine Wine Bar. The cafe is owned by Tseitlin and his wife Linda, who also own Free Wind Travel and Red Rock Insurance, and have been working in Central Square for 20 years.

But Tseitlin could never find good local coffee. His clients would travel to Salem and Beverly, but Tseitlin felt that was too far. Meanwhile, other coffee shops opened, but their coffee didn't measure up to Tseitlin's standards.

So the couple decided to provide the coffee themselves.

“We had no business plan,” Tseitlin said. “We just knew that this is what was needed.”

So the Tseitlins found a small roasting company in Salem to pick out the perfect blend of beans and roasting conditions for their signature blend. They buy coffee once a week, so they serve only coffee that has been roasted within, at most, 10 days, Tseitlin said.

But a coffee shop is more than a place to get a quick cup of Joe. And that's where Linda — who notably drinks only herbal tea — comes in.

“My job is to look out that the food, service and ambiance measure up to the standards of the coffee,” Linda Tseitlin said.

The Tseitlins wanted to create a downtown destination where business people could meet and



Cafe Moka

Linda and Yakov Tseitlin own Cafe Moka in Central Square in Lynn.

network, friends would gather, and where individuals could relax with a tea and a good book. While Lynn has several restaurants, they tend to be very exclusive, Linda Tseitlin said.

Several restaurants are too expensive for the average resident to visit for a daily meal; while the small ethnic restaurants are more affordable but primarily offer take-out food and cater to specific ethnicities.

“We wanted to make a place where people would feel comfortable no matter what their background is,” Linda Tseitlin said. “I think what people are excited about is this place hit a middle spot.”

So Cafe Moka has tables for two and tables of eight. There are couches and free Internet is available, but talking is encouraged as well. There is no television. The city is encouraging the Tseitlins to apply for a license to serve beer and wine, which Linda Tseitlin said they are interested in getting. Yakov Tseitlin loves jazz and said he would love to have a jazz night for musicians to come and jam. Linda Tseitlin is interested in holding networking nights for professional women.

But the more immediate goal is to just provide more of the moments the Tseitlins treasure.

“There was one Saturday when there were lots of people and there were people going from table to table, talking with each other, and everybody was happy,” Linda Tseitlin said. “We have those moments, but not a lot of them.”

But downtown resident and neighborhood activist Seth Albaum said he expects Cafe Moka to become an integral part of the downtown life, especially if it extends its hours into the evenings.

“It’s the whole idea of the third place — the place that is not home and not work,” Albaum said. “They help in that regard, especially now that they are open later on Thursday and Fridays ... it’s a great addition to the neighborhood.”