

Life in the Slow Lane at Obraz Zhizni

By [Lara McCoy](#)

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Greek salad at Obraz Zhizni gets an additional kick from homemade pesto.

From the minute you walk in to Obraz Zhizni, you are struck by how different the place is from a typical Moscow restaurant. The yellow walls give the small cafe an overall impression of warmth, and a tree sprouts from the floor near the entrance, decorated with ribbons. Tables are scattered around, and there is no standard seating arrangement. Tables are set for two, three or five, but can also be quickly separated or pushed together to arrange space for the right number of guests.

Obraz Zhizni, whose name means "Way of Life," is the kind of place you want to sit and stay awhile, which is a good thing, because the service is incredibly slow. On any given day, there are only a couple of waiters, who despite their extremely good nature, never seem to get in any hurry. If you send the waiter away without ordering, he may never come back, which is too bad since the menu requires some perusal. It's not over-long, but the offerings are unusual for Moscow.

The menu is a mix of Russian classics and traditional Israeli dishes, including many

vegetarian and Kosher options, and during a recent lunch, my dining companions and I enjoyed something from every category. The falafel stuffed in a pita (399 rubles) wouldn't be out of place in a cafe in Jerusalem, and the fish cutlets (599 rubles) feature a perfectly crispy coating and soft filling. Homemade chicken soup (299 rubles) is available with your choice of chicken, noodles, hard-boiled egg, hot peppers and vegetables — or everything.

My personal favorite, however, is the Israeli sampler — falafel, baba ganoush, labane, pickled vegetables and homemade hummus (699 rubles). The sampler comes with warm, fresh pita — and so it's possible to forgive the place for taking so long to bring your food. There's also a table of board games to play while you wait.

Obraz Zhizni also markets itself as a wine bar, and the wine list is indeed extensive. The restaurant also has a wine club and offers wine tastings with food pairings created by the restaurant's chef throughout the year.

The owners of Obraz Zhizni are supportive of many charities, and it's not unusual to arrive at the restaurant and find an art fair or a cooking class going on. The host will always try to accommodate you, but the restaurant is fairly small and it isn't always possible, so it's never a bad idea to book in advance.

Obraz Zhizni is the kind of place you can walk in and find yourself there a few hours later, not knowing where the time went, and then find yourself returning again and again.

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