Elias Loli, left, and his brother Nabil run the Sahara Restaurant and Cedar Grocery.

Loli family brings the exotic flavor of the Mediterranean to Acadiana

By ARANDA GRIFFIN Special to The Advocate

LAFAYETTE — The blast of cool air that accompanies a dessert-sized container from the Cedar Grocery on Jefferson made of honey, cinnamon, and maybe a hint of cardamom.

The Loli family, who owns the store, fills the aroma with flavors from their native Lebanon.

Large barrels hold giant Greek and estmate that they can accommodate a variety of flavors in their store, while mostly Mediterranean snacks are offered on site.

In fact, these imported gourmet foods are all you will find in Loli’s array, which specializes in Syrian and Mediterranean foods.

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Mediterranean

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The "Sahari" is more of a restaurant with a lot of grilled chicken and beef and kabobs," said the younger Leil. "People who talk about the restaurant say things like, "That's what Dad's grocery people.""

"Dad's" former restaurant and diner Monday through Tuesday.

"Our father had a grocery store and cooking has always been a part of life in our family," said another Leil family member. "We learned to cook from him. She died two years ago, but before that she was happy to watch her in the kitchen." The Leil's family moved from their home in Damascus, Syria, began in the 1970s when George Leil moved to the United States then eventually to Lebanon to teach in the architecture department of the Lebanese University. He later started a business. To help in the family's business. Today, George, Nabil, Elias, their four sisters and their father live in Lebanon.

"Our dad said he was going to buy a house in Syria but never made it," Nabil said. "We finally decided to settle here." Nabil said he was "very happy to be here and I went into business with him and opened the grocery." He eventually bought out his father.

"All the credit for our success goes to my mother and my dad," Nabil said. "We started the business and when they passed away, we had to work hard to keep it going."