

Created by: Debra C. Argen

## Khyber Grill



Pan-Indian Cuisine in Midtown New York City.

Executive Chef and Co-Owner Dandhu Ram, Co-Owner Vijay Rao and Sommelier/Manager Bikky Sharma are charming New York with their restaurant [Khyber Grill](#), where they are creating food and wine pairing experiences on a global scale.



Chef Dandhu Ram, whose experience includes working as the Chef de Cuisine at the prestigious award-winning Bukhara Restaurant in New Delhi, India, training with Master Chef Madan Lal Jaswal, and creating dishes for heads-of-state, he is well prepared to take on the New York culinary scene. Sommelier/Manager Bikky Sharma, a Nepal native, has learned his craft at some of the top resorts in the world, and is always looking for new wines to add to his expanding wine repertoire, and updates his wine list every 2 months.

In July 2005, we went to Khyber Grill to have drinks at their Spice Lounge, where Bikky Sharma demonstrated that he is every bit as versatile at creating cocktails as he is at wine pairing, when we sampled his exotic Fresh Tamarind Martini. Paired with their amuse bouche of 2 vegetable tikkes with mint and tamarind sauce, it was pure magic. Their spice martinis include green chili, cilantro, fresh tamarind, fresh mango, chocolate-cinnamon, apple and mint. The Spice Lounge serves drinks with a complimentary canapé from 5:30 pm &ndash; 7:30 pm, and it is a great place to relax after work or visit pre-theatre, as they also have a Mini-Tasting Menu of 4 small courses paired with 3 wines. In addition to the martinis, and extensive wine selection, they also carry many wines by the glass.

This upscale Indian restaurant features a small seating area with a waterfall in their Spice Lounge, where guests can relax on yellow faux suede banquettes under a hand-painted ceiling. The brass and marble bar has comfortable stools also in yellow faux suede.

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After our Fresh Tamarind Martinis, we moved from the bar, into their pretty dining room with slate tile walls, yellow faux suede banquettes, where the tables were draped with linen tablecloths, the walls glowed from the light of the brass sconces, and soft Indian music played in the background.

Khyber Grill prides itself on its *Khana Chakhna* (Chef's Tasting Menu) and its *Shakahari Khana Chakhna* (Chef's Vegetarian Tasting Menu), which can be paired with Bikky's wine selections. Bikky began our tasting with a glass of champagne, which paired exceptionally well with a *Spicy Vegetable Roll* of potato, green peas, cauliflower and spices, served with a mint and tamarind sauce, and continued to be the perfect foil for their new *Spicy Crab Cake* served with mango salsa and a green chili paste, which had a crispy exterior and spicy crabmeat interior. The champagne bubbles mixed with the spices on our palates to create an interesting sensation. We continued with *Palek Ke Patte Moong Ke Saath* (crispy, bite-size spinach and mung bean sprout), which had a fresh taste with lemon, onion and cilantro, and crispy light batter deep-fried spinach and crunchy mung beans. Once again, we had the *Samunder Ke Moti* (Tandoori-grilled sea scallops marinated with yogurt and herbs, served in a crispy potato basket), and we were equally impressed the second time around, with the succulent scallops that were seared with a crispy exterior. The chef will adjust the spice levels to each diner's heat preference, and since we like our Indian food on the spicier side, he readily accommodated our needs.



The tasting continued with *Tandoori Tulsi Ke Murg* (farm-raised chicken breast with mint, cilantro and fresh basil), which was delicious and tender chicken with a coating of mint and basil, and *Jalwa Ke Moti* (hung yogurt and hot paprika-marinated jumbo shrimps served with mint rice, crispy shoestring okra fries), which were paired with a 2001 Monarchia Zen, a medium-bodied white wine with ripe pear and peach on the palate. *Gobi Manchurian* (crispy cauliflower with a tomato, red chili, garlic and ginger sauce), *Patrani Macchi* (herb and coconut marinated halibut steamed in a banana leaf and served with fluffy lemon rice) and an *Onion Kulcha* (naan stuffed with caramelized onions, herbs and roasted cumin seeds), which was a delicious hot bread served with a grated cucumber and cilantro sauce, which Bikky paired with a 2001 Anakena Merlot from Chile, and although he does not usually care for merlot, he felt that this was really good, and it was. *Masaledar Lamb Chop* (marinated lamb chop with spicy southern potatoes, savory mango chutney) rounded out our savory tasting menu.

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We ended our tasting menu with *Homemade Chocolate Mousse* and an almond *Kulfi* (Indian ice cream), which Bikky paired with a 1996 Royal Tokaj, which was an especially good year for Tokaj wines, and was a wonderful companion to the desserts.

Of course no trip to Khyber Grill would be complete without a trip to the back of the restaurant, where I stood by the large window watching Chef Dandhu Ram cooking in the Tandoori ovens (clay ovens). The next time we return, I want a table with a view of the window so that can I watch Chef Dandhu Ram throughout the evening in action, and I want to sample by way through their other spice martinis!

The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner 7 days per week, and also has take-out and delivery service available.

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