

A Few Unknown Facts About Indian Cuisine

Having traveled and spent a few months in India, I have experienced the cuisine first hand. Even prior to my trip, I always had loved Indian food and spent many weekends indulging in a chicken Korma, mopped up with a Naan bread or Poppadoms or both depending on the size of my appetite. To that came rice and mango chutney - it was nearly always the same thing that I picked from the menu but I was always left with a protruding belly and a satisfied look on my face. I must admit that it was the Indian cuisine that played a huge part in choosing India for my backpacking venture.

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Prompted by the locals and companions I had met on the way, I started to look further than just chicken Korma - the most popular dish west side. I came to realize that what I had regarded as traditional Indian cuisine in the past - was more of a re-designed version to cater for the Western palate.

On my flight back home, I already began to crave a plateful of appetizers - pakoras and samosas. I knew that I couldn't possibly go back to my old routine - instead I started to wonder where in Vegas they would be hiding an authentic traditional restaurant, perhaps one that not only has regional delicacies from Bengal or Kerala but an atmosphere and décor to match.

What makes Indian food so special is its cooking methods and the clever use of spices to enhance any dishes flavor. The other appealing thing I found about Indian cuisine is, although the selections of meat and seafood are bountiful and delicious - for vegetarians or those who fancy a meat-free night, you would have no issues in an authentic Indian restaurant. It might be an unknown fact, but a large portion of the Indian nation is in fact vegetarian. They use beans and pulses to dishes to give depth and plenty of fresh vegetables, paneer (a type of cheese) and of course lots of spices. Rice is nearly always the official accompaniment to dishes but in some regions potatoes are also used. When I tried eggplant cooked in the Tandoor I was nearly ready to transform myself from a carnivore to a veggie.

That didn't happen of course, at least not after I sampled the preferred meat - lamb, in all its variations. When I was in Goa, I came across the regional dish of lamb vindaloo. It is not for the faint hearted - packed with spice this is definitely hot on the tongue but I am a curious soul and couldn't hold back! Then there was the Boti Kebab, tender ground lamb pieces marinated in some secret recipe and cooked in the Tandoor served with Raita - a mix of yoghurt, cucumber and carrots.

Chutneys and pickles are a staple to Indian cuisine - there are so many to choose from I could even fill up on Roti (a soft whole wheat bread) dipped or smothered in them alone! Aside from mango chutney, try also those made up with mint, onion or peanuts.

The Tandoor is a clay oven that is used widely to cook and bake both meats and bread. The heat comes from burning charcoal to give a unique taste to chicken, seafood lamb and Indian bread.

You might be asking yourselves if I ever found that restaurant in Vegas. It didn't take as long as I imagined, of which I am thankful for as it is now my favorite retreat for weekends. I don't know how I ever lived without having the local restaurant 'India Oven' by my side. It has an extensive menu and beautiful interior to bring the taste of India home.