



# NEW YORK

ultramodern "Nowhaus" statement.

The food is some of the best, and certainly the most freshly prepared, Indian cuisine that I have had anywhere, and that includes India. I suspect that the potli samosa appetizers will quickly become a signature dish for Ms. Malhotra. Crisply fried beggars purses filled with aromatic spices and a choice of chicken, spiced tuna, or potatoes are served atop a yin/yang swirl of tamarind chutney (for sweetness) and coriander chutney (for savoriness). The key to the chatpata murg (highly seasoned grilled chicken cubes) is a tomato-cumin-and-mustard-seed chutney that, if I can get the recipe down, I plan to try with some fried bluefish this fall.

Among the entrées, I especially like rai allu, roasted potatoes and chili peppers redolent of curry leaves (a fragrant herb with a slight bouquet of sesame, not to be confused with curry powder). It gets its final satisfying crunch from toasted mustard seeds. Think great home fries. Barrah, marinated lamb roasted in a tandoor oven, was briskly spicy, with a bright-tasting curried marinade. The noorie malai tikka is a subtler dish of chicken marinated in white pepper, yogurt, and cardamom. I recommend this for any in your party who don't want

overpowering flavor or spice. However, if you are of the too-much-ain't-enough school, you will be hard-pressed to find a more spectacular dish than the khaday masala ka gosht (which sounds to me like a Sanskrit haftarah). It is a succulent mélange of stewed lamb, slow-cooked with whole sticks of cinnamon, cardamom seeds, cloves, black pepper, onions, tomato, and garlic. Every culture has its one-pot meal that defines home cooking. If my home were in the Punjab, I would never leave town without the secret of this recipe.

Desserts include kulfi, slices of very creamy ice cream made with pistachios and saffron; and shahi tukda, a bread pudding with dried fruits. The latter confirms my lifelong love affair with bread-based desserts, an unquenchable passion that is surpassed only by my attachment to rice pudding, which Cafe Spice also turns out to cardamom-accented perfection.

*Lunch, Monday through Friday from 11:30 to 3, Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 3; dinner, Sunday through Wednesday from 5 to 10:30, Thursday through Saturday 5 to 11:30. Appetizers, \$4-\$8; entrées, \$13-\$18. A.E., M.C., V.* ■

*Peter Kaminsky's 1997-98 reviews are available at [newyorkmag.com](http://newyorkmag.com).*

**Cafe Spice** (72 UNIVERSITY PLACE; 253-6999) is the newest in a series of Indian restaurants created by the husband-and-wife team Sushil and Lata Malhotra. In the heyday of the steam-table "businessman's lunch" that afflicted many of New York's Indian restaurants, the Malhotras' first restaurant, Akbar, was notable for the freshness of its fare. Then, in 1987, they opened Dawat, where, in collaboration with Indian cookbook author and TV personality Madhur Jaffrey, they developed a menu featuring regional specialties from all over the subcontinent. Cafe Spice, like any self-respecting nineties restaurant, is "themed," a word that can put you on guard but that in this case turns out to be a devotion to the tastes of cardamom, anise, turmeric, ginger, chili, and cinnamon. These same spices suggested the palette for the space created by Wid Chapman, chairman of the interior-design program at Parsons. Colorful and highly utilitarian, the room makes an