

# MEAT DISHES INFLUENCE MENU AT NORTH INDIAN EATERY

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One of central Ohio's most elegantly decorated Indian restaurants, with a full bar and wine list, is also one of the largest.

And while many of the recent arrivals on the Indian restaurant scene are devoted to the largely vegetarian cuisine of southern *India*, **Amul India** specializes in north Indian cooking, with its full range of meats.

The menu is available for dinner but lunches are given over mostly to a buffet and ordering from the menu at midday can be problematic.

One of the best products from the tandoori oven is the seesh kebab (\$10.99), made from chicken chopped with plenty of spices, including fresh ginger and cilantro -- which give the skewer-cooked kebabs a lively aroma.

They're served on a sizzling plate with plenty of fried onions and green peppers. The accompanying condiment trio includes an OK tamarind sauce, a cilantro-mint chutney with a garish green hue and a very hot chili-and-onion sauce -- the best of the lot if you can tolerate its power.

Most tandoori chicken tends to come out of the oven on the dry side, despite the meat being marinated in yogurt-based sauces.

**Amul's** tandoori chicken (\$9.99) is a welcome exception: moist inside, yet well-roasted on the outside. It, too, is served on a sizzling plate with onions and green peppers.

From the oven also come very good, yeasty nans, or flatbreads. Start with the regular nan (\$1.85).

The ginger is weak on the Kadahi ginger chicken (\$11.50), but hot peppers team with bell peppers to save the day for the hunks of boneless chicken and their creamy sauce.

**Amul India** uses so many spices with its biryanis that the basmati-style rice is dark. Not surprisingly, it's also well-flavored, avoiding the sin of overcooking. The mixed biryani (\$12.99) has small pieces of lamb and chicken throughout, but the spicy rice steals the show.

For more lamb cubes in a creamy, curried sauce rich with ground cashews and lightly colored with tomato, try the lamb korma (\$11.75).

On the vegetarian side, eggplant is creamed with peas, sweet peppers and onions to produce a spicy, smooth dish that's great over rice (bhartha, \$9.99); and the saag biryani (\$10.50) is a savory and buttery blend of rice with pureed spinach and the occasional cashew piece.

Equally savory is the dal makhani (\$7.99), with lentils (creamed and whole), butter and a wide range of curry spicing.

**Amul India's** way with okra is softer than others but full of flavors, from the assorted spices to the non-sticky okra itself (bhindi masala, \$9.99).

Recommended yogurt drinks include a salty lassi (\$1.75) seasoned with cumin and a mango lassi (\$1.95) with an excellent balance of tart and sweet.

Broken rice is used to make the kheer (\$1.75), or rice pudding. **Amul India's** version is generously sprinkled with chopped pistachios and has a milky flavor punctuated by rose water. There's less rose water in the kulfi, a type of ice cream that is milky and sweet with a flavor like condensed milk, seasoned with some pistachios (\$1.99).

The wine list is unusually elaborate for an ethnic restaurant, and the markups are lower than average: You can get a very drinkable pinot noir -- friendly with the bulk of the menu -- in the form of a 2005 burgundy from Latour for \$19.95.

Jon Christensen reviews restaurants for The Dispatch.