



review: Glory of India by dee Hobsbawn-Smith

515 - 4th Avenue S.W. Reservations: 263-8804

Good news travels fast. An invisible sign hangs figuratively above Glory, saying, "Good eats here." At lunchtime on weekdays, the lineup extends out the door and down the street, despite every table being filled by diners canny enough to reserve ahead. The lunch buffet is one of the great values of downtown dining. But call ahead to avoid that lineup. Or go during the evening, and order à la carte.

Glory has recently enlarged its space, relocating and enlarging the buffet table at the same time. Servers struggle at times to keep up with the busy lunch trade; plates may pile up on your table, as they did on ours, your chai may take a few extra minutes to steep. Busy is good – it means the naan is fresh from the oven, even if you have to hoard a few extra pieces until the next allotment emerges from the kitchen. But the food is worth it, and the management is unfailingly hospitable. Do not go expecting to imbibe –

the wine list is negligible and mostly composed of varietals that do not enhance Indian food. Opt for good beer or chai instead.

On a recent lunch with the Long-legged Kickboxer, we love the vegetable selection, a reminder that Indian food is the greatest vegetarian cuisine on the planet. We ignore the inexplicable Western salads at the cold end of the buffet – potato, meager mixed cucumber, tomato and onion, and macaroni – and enjoy the eggplant with green beans and the great bite of ginger, rich korma loaded with vegetables, dal with cumin and cream, potato pakoras, housemade carrot and lime pickles, and lentil papadums.

At dinner another night, the Elephant's Child insists on the butter chicken and the rogan josh. Both are good, and more plentiful than portions have been in the past. More vegetable wonders, which even my meat-loving Morning Man enjoys – the aloo gobi, chunks of firm cauliflower and succulent

potatoes; paneer in bright spinach puree; garbanzos with mango powder; samosas stuffed with peas and potatoes. It would be easy to revert to vegetarian status here. Prawns are perfectly cooked, fat and juicy in tomato masala. Goa-style fish is spicy, enriched with coconut. Eat cucumber slices to cool your mouth. Lamb chops, succulent and gingery, are tandoor-grilled, and southern Indian chicken is assertively hot.

Explore the varying textures of Indian dessert. The Kickboxer and I both enjoy the pistachio halva, gently scented with cardamom, but the carrot halva is too coarsely textured; rice pudding is nursery-room soft, scented with cardamom and cinnamon; gulab jamun, syrup-poached with coconut, is cake-like and not too sweet. Order another cup of chai and exhale. Aaah. Good food.

dee Hobsbawn-Smith is a Calgary-based food writer and author