

Glorious, spicy fare takes the chill off

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Illustration: Photo: Mikael Kjellstrom, Calgary Herald / Kiran Bakhshi with tandoori prawns and Khandari lamb chops.

There's so much ranting and raving about the spectacularly popular lunch buffet offered by Glory of India, we decided we needed to do an evening review, assuming we'd be able to rave about the dinner as everyone else raves about the lunch.

Owner Jassie Bakhshi says weekend dinner attendance at the downtown restaurant is almost as high as that of weekday lunch. The night we were there, a bitterly cold Friday, was "dead," according to Bakhshi.

We thought the large, attractive dining room looked reasonably busy, but certainly not crazy-busy. It was the end of the Christmas holiday season and unreasonably cold, so normal diner-outers were hunkered down at home by the fireplace.

But, when there's work to do, we're up to the challenge, cold or no, looking for something spicy and warming.

Glory of India fit the bill admirably. A mixed vegetarian appetizer plate (or non-vegetarian, if you prefer) delivered small, delicate, very crisp samosas -- certainly some of the best of this food -- plus veg pakora and paneer pakora (\$8.95).

Sides of smooth tamarind chutney and hot -- but not too -- mint chutney started the warm-up process.

What turned out to be a favourite was kandhari lamb chops, a house special marinated tandoori-style (yogurt, ginger, garlic, spices), charred in the tandoor and served on a sizzling plate atop charred onions (\$13.95).

If you're not a lamb lover, this will surely convert you. This straight-up, unadorned dish was also a perfect counterpoint to our saucy dishes.

Lots of vegetarian food is available: our choice was dumplings of vegetables, paneer and raisins, bathed richly in cream, almonds and cashews (\$11.95).

A Glory of India signature dish is chicken chatinard (\$11.95), in which chunks of tender chicken are served in a spicy -- but not too -- curry based on tart tamarind rounded out with warm, aromatic spices featuring a strong cardamom presence.

The Goan fish curry was highlighted by a slightly sweet, sour sauce of coconut milk, chiles and tamarind (\$21.95). Naturally, all these sauces were happily scooped with torn hunks of excellent fluffy, slightly chewy garlic naan and tandoori roti.

Almond kheer (rice pud) almost finished us off, but rounded out our richly flavoured, fully satisfying meal with an appropriately creamy ending.

We warmed up in the beginning with chai tea and cooled the culinary heat with Indian beer.

At this writing, Glory does not do BYOW (bring your own bottle of wine), but plans to. Phone first.

Glory amply deserves its reputation as serving some of the tastiest, most interesting East Indian food in the city.

Glory of India

515 4th Ave. S.W. 263-8804

- Food: Very good

- Service: Pleasant, attentive

- Specialty: East Indian

- Prices: \$7.95 to \$15.95

- Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Monday to Friday; 5 to 10 p.m., Monday to Saturday

- Credit: Visa, MasterCard, Amex, Interac

- Reservations: Recommended

- Parking: On-street

- Wheelchair access: Yes

- Washrooms: Clean, wheelchair facilities

- No-smoking area: No smoking at all

- Licensed: Yes