

NYC's Indian Restaurant Scene Is Hotting Up

Forget all you thought you knew about curry: India's vast cuisine is making first-class headlines at last

By [Sara Pepitone](#) • 01/11/17 12:48pm

The new year is here, and it's time to embrace some truths. Here's one: Muddled mush is not Indian food. Here's another: If you taste only hot chili, it's not Indian food. You know how there's no chop suey in China? Or, if there ever was, it in no way resembled what emerged in the U.S. Same goes for what we've come to call "Indian," as if the seventh largest country in the world (by geography) with the second largest population and 14 different official languages could be represented by a single cuisine. Chefs from places like Jaipur, Goa, New Dehli, Patna, Melbourne and Houston (yes) are here to educate us, in the most delicious of ways. Goodbye, unrefined *chicken tikka masala* and dare-you-to-eat *phaal* (which was created in England, by the way). Hello, *Black Spiced Poulet Rouge* and *Tofu Medu Vadai with Gunpowder*.

If a single spice dominates a dish, or spices are overpowered by chilies, something is wrong. Distinct flavors and balance is everything. Of course, you know this from, uh, all other food. Now notice it in Indian, because this is Indian food in New York City in 2017. If you've been paying attention lately—because you watched *Indian Summers* (gorgeous drama about the final years of British rule) or saw Yatra Online listed on the Nasdaq in December (the second Indian online travel agency to do so)

or know where Pune is (don't make us say it, not about the Davis Cup)—India is everywhere.

“As American businesses have expanded to India and more tourists have traveled to India, there has been more exposure and interest in diverse Indian cuisine from the country's many regions,” said chef Hemant Mathur of Sahib (104 Lexington Avenue), who has waited more than a decade for this. In 2007 Hemant was at Devi where he received the first Michelin star for an Indian restaurant in the U.S. He's also responsible for the Michelin star at Tulsi (211 E. 46th Street). This means something. You may know Junoon (27 W. 24th Street) has one too. Yet the offerings still eluded most of us.