

INDIAN COMMUNITY

Discovering Indian cuisine in Jakarta

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Prasanti Widyasih Sarli, a 27-year-old assistant lecturer at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), who loves Indian cuisine, said she was often confused when trying to find Indian restaurants in Jakarta when she was in the city at the weekends.

"I really like *masala dosa*, a food from southern India. I prefer the region's vegetarian foods as opposed to the foods from the northern part of India. Aside from that, probably *naan* bread and *saag paneer*," she told *The Jakarta Post* in an interview recently.

Masala dosa is made from rice, lentils, potato, *methi*, curry leaves and served with chutneys and *sambar*. The *saag paneer*, meanwhile, is a traditional Indian creamed spinach dish with fried paneer cheese.

"The flavor of their spices is so distinctive, unlike any Indonesian foods I've discovered," she said.

"I, unfortunately, don't eat a lot of Indian foods when I'm in Jakarta. It's hard to find Indian restaurants in the city".

There are, actually, more than 30 Indian restaurants in Jakarta. Prominent ones include Royal Kitchen, D'Bollywood, Ganesha Ek Sanskriti, Queen's Tandoori, Hazara, Front Page, Man Aur Tan, Namste Resto and Koh-E-Noor.

The Royal Kitchen, located in Mega Kuningan, South Jakarta, began its culinary journey in Jakarta in 2007. It later expanded



Courtesy of youtube.com

Delicious Indian dishes served in restaurants in Jakarta.

to Balikpapan, Kalimantan. It was its first venture, in 2009, away from the capital city of Indonesia. The restaurant, which is popular among diplomats, business executives, Indians and foreigners, serves generous helpings of its signature North Indian dishes, as well as new age cocktails, with superbly consistent taste and presentation.

The harmonization of a modern setting with subtle lighting, contemporary artifacts, classic Indian genre of music, water features and the finest service standards have made The Royal Kitchen a preferred dining destination for many.

D'Bollywood restaurant in Plaza Festival town square in Kuningan, South Jakarta, meanwhile, combines its offerings of Indian foods with several domestic and

Western dishes.

Ganesha opened its first restaurant in June 2003 in Bank Rakyat Indonesia Building, Semanggi, Jakarta. It brought an ethnic Indian atmosphere to Jakarta, alongside its firm commitment to serve authentic Indian food for culinary enthusiasts in town.

Indian food in Jakarta is very expensive, even more than in Singapore. But now Indonesians can buy Indian food for affordable prices at one place in Jakarta, thanks to the newly opened Lulu Hypermart and De-

partment Store, which is located in Cakung, East Jakarta. But it is not a restaurant.

For example, a *naan* bread costs only Rp 3,500 at Lulu, whereas the same *naan* may cost Rp 30,000 in an Indian restaurant in West Jakarta. Likewise

with mutton, chicken, eggs or vegetables. It looks like typical Indonesian fried rice.

"It's not just the Indian food, most of the fruits, vegetables and many other items are very cheap. The prices of many goods are very competitive," Bobby Kuncoro, who lives in Cakung, told *The Jakarta Post*.

Story behind the food

Indian cuisine features a wide variety of regional and traditional cuisines native to India. The country's culinary traditions are actually very diverse, thanks to the variety of soil types, climates, cultures, ethnic groups and occupations, and use locally available spices, herbs, vegetables and fruits.

Indian food is also heavily influenced by religious and cultural choices and traditions. There have also been Middle Eastern and Central Asian influences on North Indian cuisine from the years of the Mughal rule. The culinary tradition is still evolving as a result of the country's cultural interactions with other societies.

The other thing about Indian food is that it is very spicy. Many

Indian dishes have a different flavor because of the range of spices. But don't worry, the desserts are sweet being mostly made of sugar, wheat and milk. Indians eat rice mixed with yogurt. Beef is mostly absent from Indian restaurants in Jakarta.

Beef consumption is taboo, as cows are considered sacred in Hinduism. However, Muslims and Christians, who constitute around 20 percent of the Indian population, eat beef in India. Some sections of Hindu society also eat beef.

During the Middle Ages, several Indian dynasties were predominant, including the Gupta dynasty. Travelers to India during this time introduced new cooking methods and products to the region. India was later invaded by tribes from Central Asian cultures, which led to the emergence of the Mughlai cuisine, a mix of Indian and Central Asian cuisine. Hallmarks include seasonings such as saffron.

Staple foods of Indian cuisine include pearl millet (*bajra*), rice, whole-wheat flour (*atta*) and a variety of lentils, such as *masoor* (red lentils), *toor* (pigeon peas), *urad* (black gram) and *mong* (mung beans). Lentils may be used whole and de-husked – for example, *dhuli moong* or *dhuli urad*, or split, more popularly known as *dal*.

Many Indian dishes are cooked in vegetable oil, but peanut oil is popular in Northern and Western India, mustard oil in Eastern India and coconut oil along the Western coast, especially in Kerala.

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**SWASTIK MART, A PLACE FOR
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Swastik Mart, first opened in 2013 at the Taman Rasuna Apartments in South Jakarta, recently opened a new outlet in Kemayoran to serve people in Central and North Jakarta.

Swastik Mart is designed to make local Indians feel at home. It carries all kinds of groceries and home goods from India. It also provides goods for festivals, celebrations and prayer events.

Customers who wish to conduct online shopping transactions with Swastik can do so through its website, swastikmart.com, and enjoy free home deliveries throughout Jakarta.

The mart has become a household name in the Indian community in Jakarta. It helps newly arriving expats settle into the country by providing them with free concierge services, guiding them to rentable apartments, helping them with their visas, pointing them to hospitals and schools and generally helping them with whatever it is they need to get used to life in Indonesia.

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Looking to spend a warm, friendly family evening enjoying good drinks, great food, awesome live music and Bindaas Indian dancing? D'Bollywood is an excellent choice!

Located in Plaza Festival in Kuningan, South Jakarta, D'Bollywood is a restaurant that captures and presents a true Indian dining experience. The restaurant celebrates the Indian adage *Athithi Devo Bhava* - In each Guest is God!

D'Bollywood has simple homely Indian warmth and offers an air-conditioned smoking AANGAN (balcony). It serves a wide range of food from all corners of India (but of course no beef or pork), a well-stocked 10-meter-long bar, live music by authentic artists from India (band of four).

All the food is mouthwatering as it is made by experienced chefs from various regions of Bharath and served by friendly staff full of familiar warmth.

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and be merry and dance till you drop – basically just be warm, fun-loving Indians.

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Come in February as the restaurant will slash prices and improve its menu with a new sous chef from the Radisson.



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INDIAN DELIGHTS AT THE ROYAL KITCHEN JAKARTA

The Royal Kitchen Indian Restaurant & Bar serves generous helpings of its signature North Indian dishes and new age cocktails with superb consistency in taste and presentation.

Located on the ground floor of the Bellagio Boutique Mall in South Jakarta, the Royal Kitchen first began its culinary journey in Jakarta in 2007. It later expanded to Balikpapan in East Kalimantan in 2009. This marked its first venture away from the capital.

Its harmonization of its modern setting with subtle lighting, contemporary artifacts, classic Indian music, water bodies and the finest of services have made The Royal Kitchen a preferred dining destination in the capital.

Menu selections include fried finger foods, soups, tandoor specials, vegetable and chicken kebabs, seafood, lamb, vegetarian specialties, yoghurts, salads, rice, bread, sweets and even its own array of Chinese dishes.

The list of dishes include Jumbo Crispy Samosa, a crispy puff stuffed with cheese, green peas, and cubes of tangy flavored potato; Tandoori Stuffed Mushroom, a button mushroom stuffed with cottage cheese, nuts, and Indian herbs, roasted in tandoor; and Batti Tikka, tender cubes of lamb marinated with a Kashmiri touch and cooked in a clay oven.

Among the curried specialties are Kadai Murgh, which is a royal preparation of chicken in onion, tomato gravy flavored with coriander seeds and peppercorns.

Desserts to try out include Gulab Jamun, a deep-fried white cheese dumpling with assorted nuts, and Matka Kulfi, a creamy and rich ice cream, made predominantly with saffron and pistachio.

For more information, call (021)-30029975, email info@theroyalkitchenjakarta.com or visit www.theroyalkitchenjakarta.com.