



Chef: Hari Nayak

Chef Hari Nayak recently earned the distinction of pioneering the next generation of Indian cooking. It has been said that his new, modern outlook on Indian cuisine has created a bit of a sensation in North America. When H.P. and J.T. Patel set out on their quest to find a consulting chef for their new restaurant venture, it was Nayak who would help them redefine Indian food in a new, deconstructed way that pushes the boundaries. They began a culinary journey together, and the destination was Tandur Indian Kitchen.

The chef, restaurateur, and renowned culinary consultant has authored six best-selling cookbooks. A Culinary Institute graduate, he trained with top chefs and garnered the praises of food critics, and his most recent book was acclaimed by the LA Times. The signature recipes of Tandur Indian Kitchen have that Chef Nayak touch from the entrees, wraps, curries and chutneys to the beverages.

Although this is his ninth restaurant project, Tandur is the first of its kind. "I believe that we have created a unique brand that gives Tandur the potential to become the first of many. That in itself has never really been done with Indian restaurants. The Patels have the business experience, and the time is right for Indian cuisine," says Nayak.

The menu itself is a work of art, years in the making in collaboration with the owners. They identified global styles that you would find in any corner of the world that served Indian food: Tikka Masala, Vindaloo, Korma, and Kadai. No small task when you consider India is a complex array of flavors from 29 states. Chef Nayak created recipes inspired by these iconic styles and city-themed names of menu items.

These flavors were incorporated into entrees as well as deconstructed versions that are more approachable and convenient like Roti wraps, salads, and kebabs. Even the beverages are original and exciting, with chef-inspired Lassi (like a yogurt smoothie) and sparkling lemonades with unique, zesty flavors.

In fine Indian restaurants, all the spices are custom roasted and ground, so Nayak recommended that should be a distinction at Tandur. Guests at Tandur see the spices being transformed from whole seeds and roots into custom blends. The modern Tandur oven, which is the focal point of the Tandur dining area and the preparation, is another trademark that imparts the "Flame-Crafted Flavor" and texture to the meats and breads, as it has for centuries in India.

Nayak has become one of the most sought after consultants and chefs, partly because of his unique style in bringing the modern flair of a gifted chef, as well as his ability to simplify and deconstruct the intricate cooking style of India. He can simplify without losing the essential flavor quality of Indian food. His modern and approachable version of this intricate cuisine fits perfectly with the proven business success of the Patels in growing a brand of ethnic restaurants. As the consulting chef for Tandur Indian Kitchen, he helped develop the menu and will continue to make guest appearances and consultation visits. He has worked closely with Aakash Pandya who carries forward the culinary vision as In-House chef.

Nayak is known on the international culinary scene from New York to Thailand and other restaurant destinations in between. Now those roads lead to Bearden Hill in Knoxville, Tennessee.

