

Quizine



Chef Raghubeer Singh Chauhan

INTERVIEW BY
Lori McLorn

Celebrating their third anniversary In the heart of Streetsville is the authentic Indian restaurant *Nawab*. With its palatial dining room and opulent décor they have already won the hearts of many (including critics) in those few years. *Nawab* may be fairly new to Mississauga patrons, but the international chain has been growing since 1989. It was established in India and expanded to Dubai, Malaysia, Uganda and more recently here in Canada with this location. The flavours originated in Mumbai's style of Indian cuisine and were created and developed exclusively, in-house for over 20 years. I was honoured and thrilled to interview their Mississauga chef Raghubeer Singh Chauhan via email. He is presently vacationing in India—sourcing out new menu ideas.

PHOTO BY
Steve Uhraney

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Where were you born Raghubeer?
I was born in Uttarkand India.

When did you come to Canada?
I came to Canada in 2009.

What was it that inspired you to pursue a culinary career?
Working in the Nawab kitchens in India when I was younger, I worked my way up the ranks from kitchen helper to head chef.

Did you receive formal culinary training?
Yes, I trained in Dubai, Poona India and I also worked in Mumbai India as a Tandoor helper. I was also the chef at our Thornhill location and then transferred to Streetsville.

What are some of your memorable accomplishments from your career?
I worked at the Jaykar Restaurant in India and was merited for excellent skills in the kitchen. And we are proud here at Nawab to be awarded Silver two years in a row in the 2010 & 2011 Mississauga News Reader's Choice Award for Best Indian Food.

After spending years working in kitchens around the world developing your skills, what do you feel is your strong point?
I absolutely love presentation. As the saying goes, "you eat with your eyes." I have always believed that.

What are some of your most popular dishes?
We have many regular clients that come back for our Vegetable Garlic Balls, Palak Kofta, Chicken Vindaloo and our Hazari Kabab.

Having so many established restaurants around the world, Nawab has built a collection of exclusive menus. What makes some of your dishes so unique?
Nawab recipes are due to our extensive and continuous travel excursions. It is a benefit that the owner, Altaf Nathoo, also has a keen interest in cooking. We understand that to mix tastes from different continents creates a fusion—cooking for east and west likings.

What are the most popular ingredients you use in the kitchen?
Definitely onions and many Indian spices.

Do you find it difficult to source out your exotic spices and ingredients needed for your recipes here in the GTA?
No they are very easy to find these days.

Did you find dishes that are extremely spicy have to be toned down for the North American palette or were they ready and willing for the experience?
Yes, to a large extent, but remember that this goes as an individual's capacity to handle mild to spicy foods.

You've been off this summer staying in your hometown in India visiting family and researching new ideas. What can we look forward to when you get back?
I am excited about some new recipes such as Roomali Roti (handkerchief bread). It is a large thin bread folded over very much like a handkerchief. It is typically cooked over an inverted kadhai (Indian style wok).

Do you have full control and input over the menu or is it a group effort?
It's a group effort. From a chef's standpoint, though, I would understand more of the ingredients and how they would blend with each other.

How many other cooks are with you in the kitchen on a busy shift?
There are usually four of us.
if you were to go out for dinner on your night off, where would you go?
To a Chinese restaurant.

What is your favourite tool in the kitchen you simply cannot live without?
It would have to be my frying pan and my chopper. I use them all the time.

If I went to your house and opened your fridge door what would I find in there?
(*Laughter*) cold drinks and Maggi Noodles.

Do you have any advice for anyone considering the restaurant profession?
It's all depending on a persons' capabilities—like how fast he/she is willing to learn. They simply must have a passion for cooking

What is the most peculiar food you have ever eaten?
Italian food.

If I gave you an all expense paid trip to go anywhere in the world to have dinner where would you go?
I would love to eat in Switzerland. I saw a documentary on the country once. It looks so beautiful that I would love to sample their local cuisine. GL

Nawab Authentic Indian Cuisine is located at 168 Queen Street South in Streetsville, 905-567-2800, www.nawabindiancuisine.ca