



TASTES OF OUR TOWN

VEGETARIANS UNITE AT CAFÉ 668

by: Kaaveh Shoman and Janine DesRoches



After a day of hot yoga and cleaning I decided it would be nice to head out and grab something to eat instead of messing up the kitchen I just spent hours scrubbing away at. Not really wanting to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the downtown core on a Saturday night, Kaaveh and I decided to head over to Café 668 located at 885 Dundas Street West. This comfortable 40 seat restaurant, just west of Bathurst, is

family owned and operated. Owner Hon Quach and Wife/Chef Ngoc Lam make a remarkable team. Ngo who has been cooking for 25 years (10yrs at Café 668), hails from Vietnam and brings with her a creative love and flare for vegetarian cuisine which we are quite thankful for.

Normally in a regular restaurant you would find a few vegetarian items to choose from. While in a vegetarian restaurant you may find a dozen or two. This menu boasts 77 items! I dare you to come here and tell me there is nothing on the menu you'll want to eat.

We decided to dive right in and grab a few appetizers. We sampled the fresh salad rolls, pan fried dumplings and mango salsa salad. When they say fresh, it is definitely not an understatement. You could see and taste the freshness in both the salad rolls and mango salsa. The mint in the salsa salad definitely kicked it up a notch. The bright oranges, yellows and greens made everything that much more appealing. You do eat with your eyes first after all.



Selecting a main was a little more difficult, as I had a hard time narrowing it down. Finally we decided on the sweet and sour "veggie chicken", spicy pad thai, coconut fried rice and vegetarian curry. Now I know what you're thinking, "veggie chicken, how can that be?" It's made from wheat gluten and hence has that "meaty" texture. This was my first experience with wheat gluten and let me just say, I'm hooked! Don't get

me wrong, I still love my tofu, but sometimes a girl needs a change! The sweet and sour sauce paired well with the all of the fresh vegetables and pan fried noodles. I cleaned my plate forgetting that there was quite a bit more coming.

I tried a bit of the Kaaveh's pad thai. Delicious as I expected. Having never tried a coconut fried rice before; I was eagerly awaiting its arrival along with the vegetarian curry. The rice was creamy with a touch of heat, quite a nice balance. The vegetarian curry included mixed vegetables, sweet potatoes (yum!) and pieces of "veggie chicken." Both lived up to the expectations I had from the previous dishes.

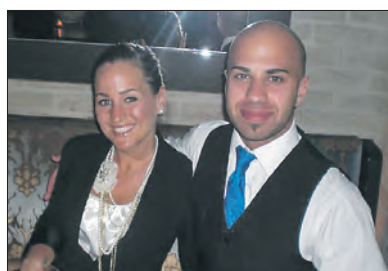
For dessert we tried our luck with the deep fried banana with coconut cream. You can tell just from the title of this dessert that we clearly picked a winner! Crispy on the outside and nice and gooey on the inside, the banana was a great match for the coconut cream. The peanuts on top definitely added the final layer of flavor to this dish. 100% satisfied and completely full we ventured home with thoughts of what we'll order on our next visit to Café 668.



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MARIPOSA BRINGS ROMANCE BACK TO TORONTO

by: Kaaveh Shoman and Janine DesRoches



After a long day of filming on set for our food TV series: Fresh Life – Season 2, Janine and I were meeting up with her brother Nick and his girlfriend Alex for dinner. We initially were going to go the traditional restaurant route, when all I needed was a freeing and relaxing escape from the day's work. I decided to treat everyone to a distinctive experience on Toronto's top rated Dinner Cruise by Mariposa. Mariposa Cruises fleet of six boats conveniently dock on Toronto's harbour around the South

perimeter of the Queen's Quay Terminal.

Although Janine and I have been in the food industry for quite some time, we never had the pleasure of a dinner cruise until now. As we entered onto the famous Mariposa Belle, we shared a mutual anticipation, the same feeling of excitement you get right before going on vacation. We were graciously greeted by a warm smile as we began our journey into the modest passageway of Lake Ontario.

The night kicked off, as every night should, with a tantalizing Pinot Noir from the Niagara region. We pretended to be sommeliers as we graciously swirled, sniffed and sipped the wine. As the sun began to set (very romantic views, great for a date), our table was called to enjoy the gourmet dinner buffet.

Both Vegetarians like Janine and Meat eaters such as me had plenty of options to consume and rave about. Janine and I started with the Mixed Baby Greens Salad with a house made vinaigrette that continuously stimulated our palate with every bite. We then rewarded our taste buds further with a Whole Wheat Pasta Bean Salad (seven beans and crisp peppers tossed with whole wheat fusilli and a light curry dressing). I couldn't believe the diverse taste coming from each type of bean within the same salad. It truly was a party in my mouth.



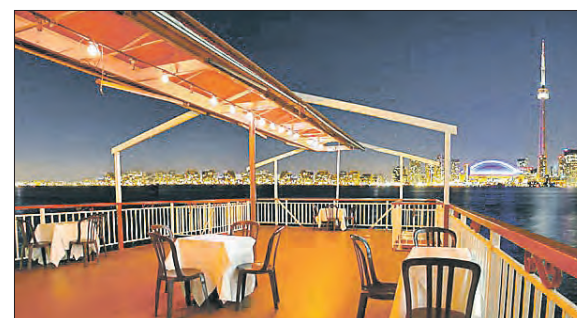
Janine was craving lasagna for a long time, and we were not able to find a satisfying Vegetarian solution until this moment. She savoured every bite of the Homemade Vegetable Lasagna (layers of vegetables, four rich cheeses,

and fresh pasta baked in their homemade marinara sauce). It was homemade to the core, and it tasted just like Nonna was in the kitchen making it fresh for all of her grandchildren on the Mariposa Belle.

I had the delectable Fresh Herb Grilled Chicken (grain fed chicken breast marinated in fresh herbs and spices, grilled to perfection and baked with vine ripened tomatoes and fresh basil). The grilled chicken paired perfectly with the locally grown Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes. Thank you to Chef Gus Sawh for the scrumptious dinner.

As usual, we saved room for dessert, and we were well rewarded by an array of gourmet cakes, tortes, fresh baked pies and platters of seasonal fresh fruits and berries.

As we savoured our last bottle of local wine, we were pleasantly engaged by the breathtaking view of the Toronto skyline. This was the perfect evening and an excellent choice to help shy away from the typical routines and acquaint ourselves with Mariposa Dinner Cruises and the remarkable harbour.





Make it IN A SNAP!

Brought to you by Rick DesRoches

DOWN HOME BREADED SEA SCALLOPS ON THE BBQ

Cooking Instructions:

½ lb of Sea Scallops (the smaller ones work better)
½ sleeve salted crackers
1 cup of flour
2 eggs
½ lb of butter
1 BIG appetite (wear stretchy pants, you'll thank me later)

Directions:

Place crackers in a food processor and crush to a fine powder consistency. If a food processor is not handy, a Ziploc bag and rolling pin will work just as fine. Crack and beat eggs in a medium size bowl. Place flour in another bowl. Take scallops and toss them in flour. Next coat in the eggs. Finally toss them in the crushed crackers and place on a baking sheet. Once finished, place in the fridge to chill for at least an hour. Heat the BBQ to 250–275 degrees. Place a pan on the grill and melt the butter until it just starts to bubble. Place scallops on the pan and cook each side until golden brown. They taste great with Sweet Potato Fries; alternatively you can also throw them on a bun with your favourite coleslaw.



SAUTEED JUMBO SHRIMP WITH PERNOD



Cooking Instructions:

9 Jumbo shrimp 16-20s peeled/deveined
½ Vine-ripened tomatoes
1 Clove garlic chopped
3 Leaves mint
1 tsp Crushed chillies
2 tbsp Pernod
½ lemon juice squeezed
2 oz Olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
1 oz Mix green salad

Brought to you by Carmine Accogli

Directions:

Sauté garlic in the olive oil until golden brown, then add the shrimp and chillies. Cook shrimp until pink and turnover, splash the Pernod and flambé (watch your eye brows). Discard the shrimp on a plate for now, add the tomatoes, lemon juice to the garlic sauce in the pan, salt and pepper to taste and cook for 2 min. Add the shrimp back in and the mint, lightly toss and put on the mix green salad.

TASTES OF OUR TOWN

LITTLE INDIA: BIG TASTE

by: Kaaveh Shoman and Janine DesRoches



As proud Torontonians, Janine and I take pleasure in walking along Queen Street West and while she “window” shops, I like to test my palate at the culturally diverse restaurants in the area. In this case, I selected Little India which is truly in the heart of this vibrant street (located at 255 Queen St. West). I may have come to this conclusion due to the rave reviews of their famous Butter Chicken or it may have been my nostalgia from watching Shahrukh Kahn as the leading hero in several Bollywood films.

The stars of this family-owned restaurant are the Selvarasa brothers (Sriharan, Sathiyaseelan and Nithyananthan). As usual, this hot spot was bustling and our taste buds were ready to discover the reason first hand.

We started with a Vegetable Pakora, which is one of Janine’s favorite Appetizers. It is an assortment of vegetables deep fried in a chickpea batter, how can you go wrong? It was much lighter than I expected and a large enough portion for two people. Behold food art at its finest, Mmmh (Did I say that out loud?), the triumphant Cocktail Sheekh Kebab made a special appearance at our table. It was like a party in my mouth, with chunky pieces of Sheekh Kebab made with a light yet thick creamy sauce.

Normally Janine sticks with the Chana Masala and Aloo Gobhi which are two staple dishes that never seem to disappoint. Today however she decided to veer

off the beaten path and have the Malai Kofta (deep fried cottage cheese balls and dumplings in creamy cashew sauce) and the vegetable korma (mixed vegetables in a cashew nut sauce). Sometimes passing up on an old favorite can lead to bigger and better things. Both dishes were filled with such a light creamy flavor she never expected from Indian cuisine. Next time we visit we’ll have to arrive 15 minutes earlier just to narrow down the choices.

I like to preface the upcoming dishes with; my name is Kaaveh Shoman and I am addicted to chicken. I started with Chicken Tikka Masala (barbecued chicken in a heavenly sauce) and then I moved on to Chef Sathiyaseelan Selvarasa’s favorite, Tandoori Chicken (tender chicken marinated in a spicy yogurt mixture and cooked in their Tandoori oven). Word to the wise: treat people with respect, be honest and always eat Tandoori Chicken. Janine noticed the excitement in my eyes as I was anticipating the first bite of their famous Butter Chicken. The boneless tender chicken pairs delightfully with the creamy tomato sauce. The food was so authentic at Little India, that it made me want to break out in song and dance (“Tunak, Tunak Tun”).

Once we had cleaned off as much as we possibly could from our plates and had the rest packed up our server brought over dessert. The Gulab Jamun is Janine’s favorite dessert on the menu. Even better is the fact that servers always remember her and bring it over even when she hasn’t ordered it. If that doesn’t make a person feel welcome and keep them coming back for more than I don’t know what does. It’s no surprise why Janine raves about this place all the time.

