

# habitat

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## Restaurants

BY CELESTE GREENBLATT

**Bukhara**  
133 Church Street  
Cape Town  
Telephone (021) 24-2479

Capetonians never seem to tire of heralding the joys of living in their fair city. Whether you agree or disagree is no longer the issue, because now they really have something to crow about. To wit, 'Bukhara'.

Located in the promenade section of Church Street, two flights of stairs bring you into a large extensively windowed room with green marbled floors. Burnt orange walls and wooden tables and chairs imported by the owner from India complete the decor. The kitchen and *Tandoor* is entirely exposed to the clientele and immediately convinces one that such transparency is bound to produce quality.

This is a fair assumption. The north Indian tastes we enjoyed set our taste buds tingling in a way none of us had experienced in a long time.

Bukhara, which is named after a city in Uzbekistan, specialises in the *Tandoori* or barbecue of north west India. These *Tandoori* dishes range from R19,99 to R27,99 and can be eaten with rice or bread – Indian style, of course. We ordered a veritable feast of *Tandoori* dishes, each one a scintillating experience. What struck me most forcibly, was the depth of flavour of each dish – not just a sauce applied to the texture of different meats.

I learnt the secret later in my discussion with genial owner and host Sabi Sabharwar over more than a couple of protracted cognacs. 'All our meat and fish is absolutely fresh, nothing is frozen here. It must then be marinated at least twelve hours,' he explained.

My favourites of the delicious *Tandoori* dishes we sampled was the Chicken Garlic Kebab (served off the skewer as are all Bukhara's *Tandoori* dishes) and the Fish *Tikka* – firm, boneless chunks of fish marinated with



chickpea flour and *Ajovain*.

For vegetarians the menu has a number of wonderful choices. Try the *Paneer Shashlik* which consists of cheese, mushrooms, green peppers and onions marinated and baked in the oven, or *Dal Makhani*, which is black lentils cooked overnight in the *Tandoor*.

The breads and rice are also an adventure. We got stuck into the *Naan*, of which there are two varieties: plain and butter. These are marvellous accompaniments to *Tandoori* dishes and when ordering them, there is no need to order rice. Five or six *Tandoori* dishes and half a dozen *Naans* are more than enough for four people and you will experience a veritable delight of flavours – none of them too hot for Western palates.

The curries on the menu also take some beating. I'll be back regularly for the Lamb *Vindaloo*. I have eaten hotter *vindaloo*s than this, but never a lamb curry served off the bone minus any fat and with the piquancy and substance of this Bukhara masterpiece.

Choose from a range of chicken, meat and

prawn curries from R19,99 to R39,99; or perhaps select something vegetarian such as the *Aloo Jeera* (potatoes fried with cumin). All at my table were unanimous in their approval of the curry dish they chose.

Towards the end of the evening I had an opportunity to talk to Sabi, the owner; and discovered that Bukhara is the latest addition to a chain of identical restaurants in Delhi, Amsterdam and London. The chefs at the Cape Town operation have been with the group for over ten years and are serving two year contracts in South Africa while teaching the locals.

So what prompted this trained nuclear physicist to abandon his profession and join the family business to open Bukhara in the Mother City? A South African of course. His wife is an Afrikaans lady from Bloemfontein, whom he met while working in Italy.

'We have been somewhat overwhelmed by the extraordinary reception we received, but at this stage I have no thoughts of extending the operation to other parts of the country,' says Sabi.

The only problem that concerns this charming young man is how not to disappoint his regulars, because his 120 seats are in such demand for every sitting.

So take fair warning: if you want to try this culinary experience – and it's one definitely not to be missed – forget about walking in on the off-chance; booking is essential.

Bukhara is licensed and is open Monday to Friday for lunch and dinner and on Saturday for dinner only.

Alexander Gilbert

**La Pizza Pazza Ristorante**  
Shop 8, Glenore Centre  
Glenashley, Natal  
Telephone (031) 52-4075

La Pizza Pazza was a welcome addition to the Glenashley dining scene when it opened two years ago. This large two-roomed restaurant with an exposed wood-burning oven appears to have >



# SCHOONSPRUIT

For those who are used to splashing out.