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**THE DOOR**  
AN IDEA HOUSE

# Spice World

Chefs from New Delhi to San Francisco are reimagining the culinary mainstays of the subcontinent, experimenting with cross-cultural mash-ups, and making Indian cuisine the latest darling of the global dining scene. **BY PRIYA KRISHNA**

## MANGO PICKLE

Chicago

The menu leans toward the sweet and sour flavors of western India, beloved by chef Marisa Paolillo-Patel's Gujarati in-laws. The chai is a sleeper hit: the spices are freshly ground for a richer, warmer taste.

**MUST-TRY DISH**  
The lamb special. The cut and spices change daily (think slow-roasted leg of lamb with a saffron-cardamom sauce), but it always hits the mark. [mangopickle.com](http://mangopickle.com); entrées \$4–\$28.

## CHAIWALI

New York City

This cozy 19th-century brownstone turned restaurant in Harlem takes a playful, international approach to regional cooking, with dishes like Goan shrimp ceviche with mango and chile and a kale pakora veggie burger.

**MUST-TRY DISH**  
Vindaloo lamb chops—they're marinated for hours in chiles and vinegar and served with potatoes spiked with fried mustard seeds. [chaiwali.com](http://chaiwali.com); entrées \$16–\$30.

## INDIAN ACCENT

New Delhi

Chef Manish Mehrotra turns Indian comfort food into haute cuisine. His menu is often fusion-y (fluffy *kulcha* breads come stuffed with bacon or Camembert) but in a way that's creative, not gimmicky.

**MUST-TRY DISH**  
The *meetha aachar* spare ribs, braised in coconut milk until tender, then fried and slathered in an addictive, sticky-sweet mango-pickle sauce. [indianaccent.com](http://indianaccent.com); entrées \$10–\$21.

## BABU JI

San Francisco

At his newest spot, Punjabi native Jessi Singh serves up many of the entrées that made the N.Y.C. original a hit. His cheeky riffs on street food—such as “unauthentic” butter chicken and crispy Colonel Tso’s cauliflower—are as visually striking as they are delicious.

**MUST-TRY DISH**  
*Kulfi*, India’s version of ice cream, in the signature chai-biscuit flavor. [babujisf.com](http://babujisf.com); entrées \$14–\$26.

## MOGHUL ROOM

Cairo

Just a stone’s throw from the Pyramids in Giza’s legendary Mena House Hotel, Moghul Room offers rich, aromatic stews from northern India that don’t hold back on the heat. Cool your palate with the buttery, pillow-soft garlic naan—it’s a scene-stealer.

**MUST-TRY DISH**  
The *laal maas*, a garlicky Rajasthani curry with red chiles and tender hunks of lamb. [mena-househotel.com](http://mena-househotel.com); entrées \$12–\$18.



A trio of curries—duck, prawn-coconut, and butter chicken—at Babu Ji, in San Francisco.