

Restaurant Sahib: Back in business

Five months after it was closed because of fire, the popular Pointe Claire eatery reopens as a British-style Indian pub

At this pace, Rajiv Chopra may want to think about getting yet another phone line. As owner of Sahib, the West Island's premiere Indian restaurant, Chopra has been fielding dozens of calls daily for five months, along with emails of support following a fire that closed the well-known Hymus Blvd. restaurant in May.

"Our clientele has always been so loyal throughout the nine years we've been here," said Chopra, overseeing work crews putting the finishing touches on the restaurant's makeover. "I get calls and emails every day from people anxious to know when we are reopening. That is what motivates me to get open, and soon."

The fire destroyed part of the building's ventilation system, all of which has now been replaced, and Chopra used the downtime as an opportunity. "We were closed for so long, waiting for permits and equipment, that we decided it was the best time to improve the restaurant and give it more of a British-style Indian pub atmosphere."

The restaurant's renowned buffet is being moved into a special corner and the new bar will offer more seating, seven beers on tap with British and Indian labels, and a few pub-style additions to the menu, such as different types of kebabs.

The front and dining rooms will continue to offer great seating, with the dining room offering a quieter atmosphere and the front featuring more flat-screen TVs.

Sahib's fresh and sumptuous food is legendary in this part of town, and that means a freshly prepared buffet lunch that is virtually sold out each day. And now, new kitchen equipment which includes two new tandoor ovens and a sophisticated ventilation system means more efficient and faster food preparation than ever, whether at lunch, happy hour or on weekends.

There have been decor changes – like the new oversized porcelain tiles resurfacing the restaurant's 2,500-square-foot space, and new stains on the abundant wood trims



Sahib's attention to quality is paramount, and evident in its lean and fat-free tandoori dishes.

– but the food has not changed, and there is no compromise on taste and quality.

"We are still the place for higher-end good Indian food in beautiful surroundings and at an affordable price," Chopra said.

Indeed, with a menu as diverse as the clientele it serves, Sahib's attention to quality is paramount, and evident in its lean and fat-free tandoori dishes, gluten-free choices and enough selections for a vegetarian paradise. Of course, no one does lamb like

Sahib, and sampling the lamb variety of what was already voted the West Island's best samosa will confirm that in one mouth-watering bite.

The freshly prepared buffet lunch is unmatched in the West Island and features favourites like Butter Chicken, succulent lamb curry, and a spectacular Chicken Tikka. Among the 17 welcoming employees are five professional Indian chefs offering authentic Indian fare at all levels of spiciness. Try a bhojan vegetarian

platter, a tandoori grill feast, or a balti pot dish inspired by the Birmingham U.K. trend.

Well situated off St. John's Blvd. between Highways 20 and 40, Restaurant Sahib is accessible to virtually anyone travelling to or from the West Island. Try the early-bird specials from 5 to 6:30 p.m., or drop by for a happy hour like no other. Open seven nights a week for dinner, Sahib can seat up to 114 diners and has facilities for private functions of up to 60 people. Or, if you'd rather do your dining at home or in the office, Sahib also offers a wildly popular delivery service and catering business. With a detailed online menu, it is easier than ever to get exotic and healthful dishes delivered right to your door or prepared for pickup.

"We do a lot of delivery in the evenings," Chopra said, "because a lot of people find Indian food to be comfort food, so we say: 'Comfort your cravings!'"

As a crew installs the new nine-seat full-service bar, Chopra recalls what Restaurant Sahib was like before the fire. "Things were going great," he said. "But when something happens, you learn humility and it grounds you. At that moment the loyalty and the appreciation of our many clients is wonderful and touching. It motivates me more than ever to offer the best dining experience.

"Remember," he said, referring to his favourite Sanskrit quote, "a guest is equal to God."

It's all part of the Sahib difference, and local food lovers will be happy to know it's back in business.



Restaurant Sahib
225 Hymus Blvd.
Pointe Claire, QC H9R 1G4
514-426-1121
www.sahib.ca