



• an indian bistro •

505 Washington Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030  
(201) 610-0900 [www.karmakafe.com](http://www.karmakafe.com)

## ZAGAT SURVEY

**2006/07**

**NEW JERSEY  
RESTAURANTS**

Food	Decor	Service	Cost
22	18	18	\$25

### ■ Karma Kafe

Hoboken

505 Washington St. (bet. 5th & 6th Sts.) Hoboken, NJ (201) 610-0900

Chances are you'll fall for India on the Hudson's "pretty" Downtown Hoboken "sister", a "hip" Indian eatery that "puts out a delectable assortment" of "interesting twists" on favorites and delivers a "bang for the buck" with an \$8.95 lunch buffet that's "a steal"; P.S. "sit outside when it's warm" and watch the Washington Street throngs go by.



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### **Z** Karma Kafe

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You can “feel the karma” from the “incredibly tasty” Indian cooking at this “cute” Downtown Hobokenite (relative of Uptown’s India on the Hudson) where the cuisine and “intimate” ambiance translate into “a spicy evening out” “if you can get a seat”; P.S. veterans vouch for the lunch buffet that’s the “best \$9.95 you’ll ever spend

**Z** Zagat Top Spot (highest ratings, popularity and importance)



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## KARMA KAFE

**Its time to tingle your tongue with tandoori**

Cheap Indian food is always a risky venture for some paper-stomached Yankees, but with the reputation that Tina and Mehernosh Daroowalla have built in this neck of the woods, it's naan and dal for everyone. Owners of the ritzier India on the Hudson, the Daroowalla's nailed their dream of a quirky, casual neighborhood joint with Karma Kafe's great, nasal clearing Indian. They've built a legion of addicts, and the word is spreading like a fiery Tandoor through the belly of Hoboken. The best way to acquaint yourself with Karma Kafe, or Indian food in general if you're a beginner, is the buffet. Karma Kafe's lunch buffet, priced below \$10, lets you navigate through every bold flavor, picking and choosing your favorite fire level and flavors. At the price, the quality can't be beat, and you'll have some extra money for some antacid afterwards. Once you've built up a tolerance, you'll appreciate that Karma Kafe offers unusual regional dishes, like peppery chicken Kali Mirch and Rajasthani achari lamb redolent with mustard seed and chili. —Mike Ness [www.aolcityguide.com/northjersey](http://www.aolcityguide.com/northjersey)



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# The New York Times

Sunday July 20, 2000

**QUICK BITE / Hoboken**

## A Curry, and Tandoori and a Story

Cousin Helen went to India once and never needs prodding to talk about the trip. Nestled in a cozy Indian restaurant, her tales flow like the Ganges itself: There's one about the snake charmer who wouldn't let her take his picture unless she gave him 100 rupees. Or the one about the elephant guide who charged her pennies to ride his lumbering pachyderm down a canyon, and a hundred times that to get back up. And Helen's description of the Taj Mahal, a shimmering marble jewel in a sea of poverty - is likely to move one to tears.

The backdrop for her latest reverie proved equally powerful. Karma Kafe, a stylish "Indian bistro" owned by Mehernosh Daroowalla, host of the more traditional India on the Hudson in the Mile Square City, offers a nifty seven-day-a-week lunch special for budget-minded folks who hate fussing with the menus. Only \$8.95 and you can eat for as long as you can take the heat. Gurmej Singh, the chef, has assembled the perfect sampler of popular dishes: tandoori chicken, saag paneer (creamed spinach cooked gently with Singh's handmade cottage cheese cubes), dal tandoori (hot lentil sauce) to spoon over your pea-and-rice pulao. There's chicken curry, peas and potatoes, and plenty of naan to sop it all up. Not to mention a bowlful of dill yogurt to cool your palate for dessert. The regular menu offers Indian dishes for us chic western types: tandoori wraps and crawfish vindaloo anyone? There's a hip looking bar, a window seat, and a television that, alas, does not broadcast classics from Indian cinema. Your own tales of the East will have to suffice; Cousin Helen does not do parties.



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# THE JERSEY JOURNAL

Friday, December 3, 1999

By S&M Kilnisan - Journal restaurant reviewers

## KARMA KAFE OFFERS INDIAN CUISINE IN PLAYFUL WESTERN STYLE

The Karma Kafe. For an Indian restaurant the name has a catchy ring to it. Informal, unpretentious and a bit tongue in cheek. In fact, what sets this restaurant apart from the area's other Indian restaurants is its unexpected hipness. Reminiscent of a Soho-style eatery, the feel here is casual, comfortable and a bit on the artsy side. Given its well-stocked bar and well-considered wine list, the Karma Kafe has all the makings of a bistro where one can gather for a quick bite and a fortifying glass of Cabernet. (the restaurant accommodates 50 diners). But this is a cafe with a distinct nationality. Through a subtle use of ethnic accents the decor is anchored to a serene Indian theme. Representing the Hindu goddesses known as "devis", an imposing ceiling medallion, painted in brilliant gold tones, immediately catches your eye. It's a beautifully complex design, which might keep your attention riveted to the ceiling if it weren't for the equally fascinating menu. (the devi's face also serves as the restaurant's logo).

Even though this is a small space, there's room for a five seater bar, above which hangs an array of brass temple bells in varying shapes and sizes, defying the curious diner's touch. Then there are the ornate table tops, replicas of colorful enameled window frames from the Indian province of Rajasthan, which are so striking-looking that they too may serve as further distraction. A glass overlay allows them to function as tables. Certainly not overwhelming, the decor is designed to delight in small, measured doses; the overall effect is one of comfort, albeit a comfort with a slightly exotic edge. Thankfully, the menu is as well conceived as the atmosphere. (There's substance behind the style.) The Kafe's owners Tina and Mehernosh Daroowalla operate Hoboken's other Indian restaurant, India on the Hudson, and have purposefully chosen to make their new establishment less formal and its menu playfully accommodating of Western influences but still representative of the breadth of Indian cuisine.

The menu, with its sophisticated focus, is cognizant of the latest dining trends and willing to incorporate them into traditional Indian cuisine. (We'd venture to say that you won't find another quite like it in Hudson County). In what other Indian restaurant would you find a take on the latest quick eats craze known as "the wrap". Here you can order a Tandoori Wrap, made with "Naan," a traditional Indian bread, and stuffed with your choice of Tandoori filling. Accompaniments include Basmati rice, the traditional yogurt dipping sauce known as "Raita," salad greens and mango chutney (\$9). Keep in mind that the menu accommodates both light and hearty appetites. The selection of appetizers is plentiful enough and their portion sizes large enough to compete with entrees. In fact, the whole point of the menu is flexibility. If a diner is interested in light fare like salad and a selection of Indian breads, so be it. The grazing palate is catered to.

Appetizers include traditional dishes like the wonderfully savory "Samosa" - deep fried pastries filled with potatoes and peas or ground chicken and peas (\$4/\$5). The deep fried vegetable and chicken fritters, known as "Pakoras", were equally good (\$5/\$6). If you are familiar with these staples of the Indian kitchen then go for something different like the Popcorn Crawfish. Generous pieces of crawfish meat, deep fried in a chick pea batter, were deliciously moist and found a spicy contrast in an accompanying tomato sauce (\$6). The Tandoori shrimp was a disappointment-only three to an appetizer serving and each unappetizingly dry (\$8). The Kabab Sampler, comprised of succulent pieces of herb-scented chicken and lamb was excellent (\$8). Other noteworthy selections include variations on American classics like chicken wings baked in a Tandoori oven and served with a spicy mustard sauce (Wings Haryali, \$6) and a chicken Caesar salad, the chicken coated in distinctive spicy tikka sauce (\$6).

Entrees are served with Basmati rice and Dal (a thick lentil sauce). Selections run from the traditional such as Chicken Curry to the unexpected such as the Crabcake Makhani - lump crabmeat cake served with a garlicky tomato sauce. Seafood dishes with a western twist abound. For instance there's the Indian version of fish and chips (Koliwada Fish & Chips). Or better yet, try the pan seared fillet of trout (Garlic Trout) rubbed with garlic and ginger, or broiled salmon (Bengal Salmon) accompanied by a tasty mustard-seed yogurt sauce. The latter fish dishes are unique to the menu. (Entrees range from \$11 to \$19). Also recommended is the Lamb Bhuna - a spicy lamb stew thick with chunks of tender lamb (\$13) and an excellent Crawfish Biryani - a casserole redolent of peppery vegetables and sweet shreds of crawfish. Vegetarian dishes run the gamut from vegetable dumplings (Kofta Makhani) to Malabar Vegetables prepared in a rich coconut based sauce and Gobi Matar-cauliflower and green peas in a thick gingery sauce. To round out the meal, order any of the bread selections. The variety is considerable from the five selections of "Paratha" (layered whole wheat bread, prepared plain or stuffed) to six variations of Naan. (From \$2 to \$3).



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# The Star-Ledger

*Friday, January 18, 2002*

**By Pete Genovese**

## Try Karma Kafe for a change of course

Hoboken doesn't really need more hip restaurants - don't you wish they'd just plunk a Wendy's on Washington Street? - but the Karma Kafe exudes a cool, instant karma. Maybe too cool this time of year. Stay clear of the tables nearest the door, or you'll get a wintry blast every time someone walks in.

The décor and style at this Indian restaurant is New Delhi meets SoHo - glass-topped tables set over colorful replicas of Rajasthan window frames, five-seat bar, tables set claustrophobically close. Waiters are far from New York snobby, and can, in fact, be quite friendly. But on both our visits they asked for our orders before we had time to skim, much less read, the menu.

Order a Taj Mahal beer, a mango lassi (a fruit and yogurt frappe), nimbu pani (lemonade) or one of the colorful cocktails, and try not to eavesdrop on the conversation of the couple at the adjacent table. (Good luck.). A vegetable samosa - stuffed crispy triangular pastry (\$4) - boasted a flaky shell, but the filling of potatoes and peas produced a "kind of bland" result, according to Katie, a colleague. But the sauces served with the complimentary basket of pappadam (a crispy, wafer-thin bread), especially the mint-infused green sauce, will have you dipping.

There was an odd moment when the waiter brought a dish he identified as chicken curry. When we countered that we ordered chicken Madras (chicken in spicy sauce, \$11), he corrected himself and said it indeed was chicken Madras. Not entirely convinced, we nevertheless kept the dish. The kabob sampler (chicken tikka, chicken ginger and lamb, \$8) is a good entry-level course in Indian food. Likewise the Karma Kafe tandoor medley (chicken, lamb, seafood and vegetables with rice, \$19), marinated in yogurt and spices and big enough for two. But the lamb tikki (\$6) and veggie tikki (\$4) - lightly breaded cutlets seasoned with herbs and spices - were dried out. A more pungent mango chutney would have helped matters.

A head-spinning spiced tomato-garlic sauce enlivened the kofta makhani (mixed vegetable dumplings, \$9). Another good, more subtle vegetable dish: chana palak (chickpeas with spinach, coriander and mint, \$9). If not quite a haven for the rich and famous, Hoboken is not exactly Cheap-Eats Central, which is why Karma Kafe's moderate prices are a welcome surprise. The tandoori chicken (four big chunks of chicken, with rice, \$11) is one good value.

Other entrees include chicken kali mirch (a tamarind and black pepper sauce, \$11); achari lamb (a mustard seed and chili oil sauce, \$13); Malabar vegetables (medley of assorted vegetables in a coconut sauce, \$9), and crawfish vindaloo (\$13).

One of the great pleasures of Indian food is one of the simplest - naan, the fluffy white-flour bread, here sublimely tender and puffy. Karma Kafe's varieties include plain naan (\$2), garlic naan (\$3), chicken tikka naan (\$3.50) and the outstanding Peshawari naan, with raisins and nuts, (\$3.50). Other appetizers and salads include bhel poori (crispy puffed rice, chickpea noodles, diced potatoes, onions and crisp crackers tossed in tamarind and mint chutneys, \$4); wings haryali (chicken wings in a spicy yogurt marinade baked in the tandoor and served with a tangy mustard sauce, \$6) and chicken tikka Caesar salad (chicken tikka strips, garlic croutons and Romaine lettuce, \$6).

The masala chai (aromatic spiced tea) fell short in the aroma and spice categories, but the mango sorbet (\$4) is fruity-smooth and refreshing. Other desserts include shrikhand (saffron-flavored yogurt garnished with almonds and pistachios, \$4), kulfi (pistachio ice cream, \$4), and kheer (rice pudding, \$4).



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**hobokeni.com**

by Joseph D'Allegro



**Hoboken Dining Guide**  
Coupons Reviews [hobokeni.com](http://hobokeni.com)

## KARMA KAFE

Tina and Mehernosh Darowalla opened this wonderful new Indian restaurant in November. They're the same pair that owns India on the Hudson farther uptown. Though prices are similar - plan on spending about \$25 per person for an appetizer, dinner and drinks - the entree selection differs and Karma's ambiance is much more hip and modern. A few brass and wood decorations are artfully laid out across the walls and ceiling, creating a very spare and elegant look.

It gets quite busy here and there are only about 40 table seats. I arrived with a friend at 8p.m. on a cold Friday and had to wait about 10 minute for a table. Making a reservation may be a good idea if you plan on going with a large group on a weekend night. The restaurant includes a small, but well stocked, bar, where you can wait for your table. Bass and Amstel Light are available (\$4 each) along with a large selection of wine and liqueur.

Karma Kafe's starter menu is large and includes a selection of fish, chicken and lamb selections along with various salads and soup options. A huge selection of tandoori breads is also available. Tandoori bread is named for the clay ovens - called tandoors - in which they are baked. My friend and I had garlic naan (\$3). It's a delicious puffy white bread imbedded with finely diced garlic. Because she is a vegetarian, my friend couldn't partake in the incredibly delicious tandoori shrimp (\$8) we were also served. These jumbo shrimp came red with spices and yogurt marinade and were served with a mustard seed sauce. We also tried a mix of large potato chunks, puffed rice, onion, crackers and chickpeas called Bhel poori (\$4). This appetizer, served cold, is an odd mix of soft and crunchy textures. It wasn't particularly spicy, but the onion taste was strong.

Some of the dinner items can be quite spicy, and if your waiter or waitress warns you that an item might be hot, believe them. I had a large, fire-red serving of crawfish vindaloo (\$13). I'm a big fan of spicy food, but this bordered on the ridiculous. If it were any hotter, the Marines could use it to torture new recruits. It proved to be quite delicious once mellowed a bit with some yogurt sauce our waitress was nice enough to provide after she saw me gasping for air. She warned me.

My friend had a mix of vegetable dumplings in a tomato and garlic sauce. Called kofta makhani (\$9), it was slightly spicy and very flavorful. Like all meals here, it was served with seasoned rice and dal - a yellow lentil sauce.

All portions are very generous, many people could probably fill up on a couple of appetizers alone. Vegetarians will especially enjoy Karma Kafe's selection. Eight flesh-free entrees are available for \$9. The lunch selection is also quite tasty and is a great deal. Sandwiches and various naan wraps are available for \$5 to \$6 or you can go for bust and opt for the \$9 all-you-can-eat lunch buffet. The buffet, which includes a soupy rice pudding for dessert, changes daily. When I went recently the buffet included several periodically refreshed trays of peas pulao (long-grain saffron rice with peas), ginger-coated chicken wings and chana saag (chick peas with creamy spinach sauce)

I would recommend that anyone unfamiliar with Indian fare should try a lassi. These are sweet yogurt frappes that can be flavored with fruit juice. The thick mango lassi (\$3) I ordered with lunch was among the best I've ever had.



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By Eugene Mulero - *Current Editor*

## In a state of Karma

### *Chic Bistro modernizes Indian Cuisine*

Mehernosh Daroowalla opened India on the Hudson almost 10 years ago in the uptown section of Hoboken. The feedback he has received over the years has been positive, but the restaurant specializes in strict traditional Indian cuisine. Daroowalla noticed he was forgetting the younger crowd. So four years ago he opened a new location downtown on Washington Street that caters to the trendy Hobokenite who enjoys Tandoori with a dirty martini. "It has a different ambiance, style than India (on the Hudson)," he said. "It looks different and feels different."

During the summer months, Karma provides outdoor seating. The inside is spacious. A large dining room with a full-service bar in the back combines upscale dining with a relaxed setting. A big traditional Indian sun is painted on the ceiling, and candles are spread out for decoration. The tables are imported from Bombay, and patrons have the option of sitting on traditional cushions or chairs.

The menu is modern Indian fare. Executive chef Gurmej Singh specializes in Baggare shrimp (\$16), jumbo shrimp stir fried with tempered mustard seeds, onions, tomatoes and garlic; Tandoori chicken (\$11), a classic Tandoor recipe with a half roasted chicken; Paneer Kashmiri (\$9), cottage cheese cubes and mixed veggies in a mild sauce with saffron; lamb Vindaloo (\$13), lamb and potatoes in our spicy hot Vindaloo sauce; and crawfish Vindaloo (\$13), shelled crawfish and potatoes in spicy Vindaloo sauce.

"We feature a lot of seafood, and our buffet is very popular on the weekends," Daroowalla said. "This is exactly what the younger, hipper crowd wants." The servers are very attentive and knowledgeable of the menu. Karma also offers an impressive wine list, traditional Indian beverages, and trendy cocktails like Cosmopolitans, Screwdrivers, and mango or strawberry colodas.

#### **Tantra, Tikka, Trout**

I began my meal with a tall glass of punch-a-tantra, a fruity blend of Absolute Mandarin and peach schnapps with orange and cranberry juices, served on the rocks. For starters I tried the samosas (\$5). This favorite Indian triangle pastry came stuffed with crispy chicken and peas. It was well presented and with mild spices. I also tried the Kabab sampler (\$8). It featured chicken Tikka Kabab, chicken ginger Kabab and lamb Seekh Kabab - a little bit of everything to work up the appetite.

Other appetizers include Tandoori wraps (\$9-\$13), Chana Kachumber salad (\$4), Koliwada fish (\$6), Tikkis (\$6), and Bhel Poori (\$4). For the main course I enjoyed the chicken Tikka Masala (\$11). The classic dish was prepared with garlic tomato sauce and mild saffron. I followed the Tikka with a dish of garlic trout (\$13). The pan seared fillet of rainbow trout was made with garlic, ginger and a variety of Indian spices. This is a formidable non-intimidating entrée that will please any patron. After the entrees I sampled the traditional rice pudding Kheer (\$4). It was sweet, simple and satisfying. Other desserts include sorbets (\$4), ice cream (\$4), and Kulfi (\$4).

Karma Kafe is located at 505 Washington St. in Hoboken. They offer a daily lunch buffet from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. during the week, and 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the weekends for (\$8.95). They have a catering menu and provide free parking at the Hudson Street lots. Their dinner hours are Sunday through Thursday from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 5 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. For information call (201) 610-0900 or visit [www.karmakafe.com](http://www.karmakafe.com).