



> Lamb stir fry

The place for Indian

Chef Kuldeep Singh has guided Origin to the top of Las Vegas' ethnic-food mountain **By Brock Radke**



EETS HALWA. IT'S FOR DESSERT. THEY TAKE some beets—something I'll typically pass on—grate them, cook them in butter and sugar with some dried fruit, milk powder and a few other seasonings, and serve them to you in a little pile of magenta. It marks

the invention of an entirely new food texture. It's soft, sweet, creamy ... and beets. Hard to describe.

But it's a great example of what's going on at Origin India. I'd never had beets like this before, and you won't find Indian food like this anywhere else in Las Vegas. It's our rare ethnic restaurant that aspires to be more than authentic. Of course, if you like to eat Indian food (and it seems like Las Vegas isn't such a big fan), your favorites are all here: crispy, potato-stuffed samosas and various flavors of chewy *naan* bread; a rich, spicy lamb kebab; the thick, soul-satisfying stew that is Indian curry. But there are plenty of other dishes that take the familiar tools (coriander, mint, tamarind, cumin, cinnamon, and fenugreek, to name a bunch) and weave them into refined applications that leave your taste buds deliciously puzzled. Scallops are wrapped in filo with lime and chili, fried crispy and plated with beetroot and olive chutney. Simple yet marvelous, the chicken-thigh *tikka* is marinated in cumin and yogurt, rendering an impressive tenderness, and served with green-brown coriander basil sauce. And one of my favorite face-slaps comes in the form of roasted black cod, perfectly flaky fish, coated in pickling spices that show no mercy, stinging your sleepy palate. It's a jolting juxtaposition, and the crispy apple-fennel salad underneath is an earthy complement.

Relatively new chef Kuldeep Singh, who previously worked at owner Maja Rajid's London restaurant, may be keeping it real with his flavors, but it's obvious he's more concerned with interesting textures and taste combinations. Under his kitchen direction, Origin India moves from the interesting, upscale restaurant it was in 2006, to an entirely new, lonely category. More developed cities have several places like this; we have very few. As CityCenter has transcended the past generation of themed hotel-casinos, this stylish restaurant is a step ahead of other Indian and ethnic eateries, adding additional twists to an already exotic cuisine. In fact, the Strip metaphor works, because that's where Origin India belongs, in the Vegas spotlight, not necessarily in the strip mall across from the Hard Rock Hotel.

There's always something new at Origin India. In December, they added a lunch buffet, featuring a rotating assortment of curries, soups and salads, rice, chicken tandoori, *naan* and more. A holistic Ayurvedic menu is in the works. And the vegetarian menu can be treated like tapas, 11 items priced at \$7 as a side and \$11 as an entrée. Seven bucks for a good-sized portion of creamy, homemade *paneer* cheese in garlic spinach is a pretty good deal. Likewise for *aloo gobi*, a spicy mixture of cauliflower and potatoes, or *chana massala*, a garbanzo bean-based delight. If the meat wasn't so good here, it would make quite a bit of sense to skip it. Did I mention there's duck confit on the menu?

Origin India ★★★★★ 4480 Paradise Road, 734-634.
Daily, 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Suggested dishes: lamb seekh kebab, \$9; roasted black cod, \$25; sag paneer, \$11; lamb curry, \$16.