

PASSAGE TO INDIA *Chutney, cardamom and curry have us eating East at three hotspots*

If you want to get an idea of what Marigold (4832 N. Broadway Ave., 773.293.4653) is all about, take a close look at their “duck leg dum” starter, which takes a made-in house Indian garam masala spice rub—created from a family recipe, no less—and pairs it with a duck leg cooked in the French confit style. It’s this combination of traditional with the unexpected that makes Marigold special. And their made-daily chutneys (mint and tamarind; tomato; onion and date) are pretty cool, too. >> On paper, mixing together Latin and contemporary Indian cuisines sounds like a bad idea. But then we take one bite of Vermilion’s (10 W. Hubbard St., 312.527.4060) skirt steak that’s been marinated in yogurt and spices—think ginger, coriander, cumin—and cooked in a tandoor oven until it’s melt-in-your-mouth tender, and we remember why we shouldn’t make assumptions. (Also don’t miss the burger trio—mango cumin plantain, tandoori chipotle burger and madras curry beef served with mango-dusted fries, tamarind chutney and pico de gallo—on Vermilion’s recently introduced lunch menu.) >> The way Angela Lee saw it Randolph Street needed a modern Indian restaurant. And she was just the person to open one, being a partner in both Sushi Wabi and De Cero. Enter new-on-the-scene Veerasway (844 W. Randolph St., 312.491.0844), which

blends Indian spices and cooking techniques with American sensibilities in a contemporary space. The menu may be designed for sharing but with dishes like garlic-mashed-potato naan, seared scallops in coconut milk, and house-made lamb meatballs with apricots and almonds, we don’t think we’ll want to.



SOMETHING ABOUT MARY

Think Bloody Marys are only suited for brunch? Don’t tell that to Charles Joly, general manager and chief mixologist at The Drawing Room at Le Passage (937 N. Rush St., 312.255.0022), who has transformed the heavy cocktail classic into a lighter, fresher drink that he insists is perfect for anytime of the day... or night. For The Drawing Room’s Midnight Mary—and for all of the hotspot’s creative drinks, in fact—Joly starts in the restaurant’s kitchen (“Great ingredients are going to come from the kitchen, not from opening a bottle,” he says), where he infuses the vodka with spices, including cilantro, pink and white peppercorns, along with vegetables such as red peppers, onions, celery. Next, Joly creates a tomato water—think freshly mashed tomatoes that are strained through cheesecloth overnight—that’s translucent but full of flavor. The tomato water is then muddled with lime juice and basil leaves, combined with the infused vodka and ice and poured through a sieve into a glass garnished with a mini sweet red pepper and pepper-stuffed olive. Mary mary quite contrary, indeed.



CALLING ALL MEATHEADS

If the pink, pig-head ticket dispenser (grab a number; you’ll need it) doesn’t tip you off to what Paulina Market (3501 N. Lincoln Ave., 773.248.6272) is all about, perhaps the glass case stuffed with their made-from-scratch sausages (curry brats, andouille and chorizo are among the dozens of options) or the hanging snack sticks (salami, honey pig tails) will. Vegetarians, you’ve been warned.

“There’s really a misconception when it comes to Cayenne pepper. When used in moderation in sauces and soups, it gives a great flavor and is not as crazy and spicy as people often think. The flavor is intense and really melts into the food.”

—Jason Paskewitz, co-owner of Jackson Park Bar and Grill, opening this spring.