

**B**eing Indian, I can speak with some authority on Indian food. I grew up eating nothing else, and we all know that no food is better than a home-cooked meal prepared by one's mother.

Now that I've moved away from home, my curry cravings are only curbed by the best Indian restaurants in Joburg. Where I go, the naan is garlicky, thin and crispy, the curry as spicy as possible and the samoosas crunchy and moreish.

Joburg has several Indian restaurants that offer the usual North Indian fare at exorbitant prices with mediocre décor and stained tablecloths.

But if you want the best food in the city, there are really only two places you should visit. One is premium and the other modest, so you can get a quality curry fix no matter your budget.

**PREMIUM:**

**Ghazal:** Coachman's Crossing, Peter Place, Bryanston or The Square, Corner Leeukop & Naivasha roads, Sunninghill.

With restaurants in Bryanston and Sunninghill, the former definitely busier and trendier, Ghazal has become an established favourite in Joburg.

The menu offers most of what you'd expect to find at any other North Indian restaurant – samoosas or badjja (a spicy snack incorporating chopped onions and a gram flour dough, then deep fried) to start, chicken tikka masala or lamb vindaloo for mains and a disappointingly “un-Indian” dessert menu of premade treats like chocolate mousse or Italian kisses.

On the table, at no charge, we were given a basket of poppadums accompanied with coriander chutney as well as tomato salsa.

To start, I had a “Mixed Platter for One”, which was exceptionally good value and could easily be eaten on its own for lunch or for a (albeit unhealthy) light dinner. Priced at R38, I was served a (huge!) samoosa, an onion badjja, a pakoda (potato dipped in gram flour and then deep fried) and two chicken tikka skewers. I found the fried snacks a bit dry and less flavourful than expected, but thoroughly enjoyed the chicken tikka – it had obviously been marinated overnight because the tandoori flavour penetrated right through to the middle of the chicken cubes.

For mains, I ordered what I always order at Ghazal, just because no other dish even comes close to its deliciousness. Chicken makhni



Lamb curry, butter chicken and naan at Ghazal.



Mutton bunny chow at Currylicious.



Soji at Currylicious.

I tried the butter chicken (again), R58, and was blown away.

It was unlike anything I've tasted at an Indian restaurant before – the flavours combined beautifully and the soft roti (R8), was a perfect accompaniment.

Another favourite was the sugar bean curry (R43), which reminded me of meat-free Mondays at home.

My husband tried the lamb curry (R68), and marvelled at the impossibly tender lamb and the melt-in-the-mouth potatoes.

All the classic curries are available in roti rolls or bunny chows, priced from R30-R46. For a lighter meal, there is also a selection of burgers, R29-R36, and toasted curry sandwiches, R15-R24 on offer.

The owner informed me that they are looking at extending the dessert menu but, for now, the only options are soji (R15), ice cream (R24), or a combination of the two (R28). Soji is a pudding, usually served warm, made with semolina that is traditionally served as dessert after an Indian wedding.

We ordered a portion to share and it was a very generous serving – the perfect ending to a fantastic meal.

If you want to try curry the way it's cooked in a South African Indian home, there is no better option than Currylicious in Joburg.

Call 011 792 4302 for Randburg or 011 704 3167 for Northriding.

Nair was hosted by Ghazal and Currylicious for this article.

For more restaurant reviews, visit Hasmita's blog: [www.joziliciousblog.co.za](http://www.joziliciousblog.co.za) or follow her on Twitter; @hasmita

## Spice up your life

*Ghazal and Currylicious won't curry favour to win your business as the proof's in the eating*

(aka butter chicken), R89, made with tender pieces of chicken in a creamy tomato sauce, flavoured with butter, herbs and spices accompanied by a garlic naan (R16), is quite possibly one of my all-time favourite meals.

The chicken is cooked in a tandoor oven first, locking in its flavour, and is then added to the tangy but sweet sauce.

After chewing off mouthfuls of the naan in all its hot, crispy glory, I then dipped it into the butter

chicken sauce before I even came close to the chicken.

Ghazal also has plenty of vegetarian dishes on offer, including paneer korma (R74), indian cottage cheese in a creamy cashew nut sauce or aloo gobi matar (R68), cauliflower, potatoes and peas in a masala gravy.

I decided to pass on dessert because I had already done enough damage to my waistline!

Call: 011 706 9412 for Bryanston or 011 807 5829 for Sunninghill.

HASMITA NAIR



Jozilicious

**BUDGET:**

**Currylicious:** Appletons Village, Malibongwe Drive, Randburg or Bel Air Mall, corner Malibongwe and Bellairs drives, North Riding.

A truly heart-warming story of a widowed mom's children setting up a restaurant to keep her occupied has turned into a booming business made up of two stores that have Joburgers lining up to get their bunny chow or roti roll, while remaining family owned and run.

Currylicious prides itself on its homecooked Durban curries, but also offers a North Indian menu.

According to the manager, the restaurant churns out a ton of lamb a month, and after tasting the lamb breyani (R54, and only available on Fridays or Saturdays) and the lamb bunny chow, priced at R46 for a quarter loaf, R82 for a half loaf and R140 for a full loaf, it's easy to see why.

While the décor and ambiance are nothing to speak of, the food makes it more than worth a visit.

# Chocs away for chocolate fun in Lindt studios

CHOCOLATE has a new home where Lindt's chocolate studio provides an interesting education for chocoholics.

Lindt has opened the world's first chocolate studios in Design Quarter, Joburg and Cape Quarter, Cape Town. The studios offer specialised training to entry level chefs, non-professionals and chocolate enthusiasts alike.

“Working with the finest Swiss chocolate every day and having the opportunity to work with people and encourage them to experiment with chocolate are a few of the things I love about my job,” says chocolate studio manager and head chef Dimo Simatos.

Some of the workshops include the entry level Chocolate Appreciation



Lindt's studio in Cape Quarter, Cape Town.

Session, advanced courses that enable you to learn various skills like making hand-crafted truffles, baking and decorating speciality cakes, and the art of macaroon making.

The Chocolate Appreciation

Session is a great way to spend an evening with a group of friends.

You are presented with a tasting plate consisting of seven types of Lindt chocolate. While you try not to devour it all, a chocolatier will tell you how chocolate is harvested and processed from a raw bean to the finished product

You'll then taste each piece, attempting to appreciate it with all five senses. Touch: a good milk/white chocolate should melt in your fingers quickly. Smell: you should be able to smell the “flavour” of the chocolate, or let it melt in your mouth and breathe in and out to inhale the aroma. Hear: the chocolate should make a crisp snapping sound when broken. See: it should have a monotone glossy



The Lindt studio in Design Quarter, Joburg.

colour. Taste: one does not have to elaborate on that one.

You are then given three Lindor balls on a stick, and are instructed to make your own “lollies”, using melted chocolate, nuts and shaved chocolate to decorate them however

you want to.

If you aren't quite satisfied after that, the studio shops have a selection of Lindt products on offer, as well as specialised chocolate equipment.

The Joburg chocolate studio has a great Easter kid's fun class available on March 28-29, for budding chocolatiers aged between 10-16. The cost is R280, and the hour-long class enables attendees to create their own Easter Egg to take home with them.

They'll be given a Lindt chocolate egg, edible cocoa butter colours for painting, and chocolate modelling paste to cut, roll and shape.

For more details on the courses, call 021 831 0380 or visit [www.chocolatestudio.co.za](http://www.chocolatestudio.co.za)