

Cafe Drake

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2007

They All Scream for Tanoreen: Restaurant Review



[En route to Bay Ridge]

Tanoreen (7704 Third Avenue, Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, 718-748-5600)

On a gray Sunday in January, during this New York winter characterized by overcast skies, we hopped in the CafeDrake-mobile and headed down 278-West to visit our always sunny friend Susan. Mama had the day off while Papa Henry tended to Baby Sloane, so we slid into a comfy 4-top all to ourselves at **Tanoreen Restaurant** in nearby Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. (For those not familiar with the outer boroughs of NYC, Bay Ridge was the setting for **Saturday Night Fever**, and came to symbolize the borough's tough-talking no nonsense Howyousedoin? attitude. Today Tony Manero would be hopelessly out of place amidst the yoga studios, health food shops and cosmopolitan dining scene.)

Tanoreen is the sort of local spot thrown recently into the limelight, a darling of magazine writers and food editors in search of the rare gem in the rough; *Time Out*, *New York Magazine* and the *Village Voice* have tripped over their glowing

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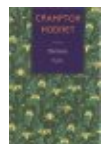
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copy to sing high praises to this establishment serving, in their own words, Levantine cuisine. For the geographically-challenged (including ourselves), this roughly translates to Middle Eastern grub borrowing heavily from the neighboring cuisines of Syria and Armenia . . . as far as we can tell.

A competent and attentive staff set things off on the right foot, going so far as to explain the contents of mysterious dishes and offering recommendations (lost somewhere in translation was our helpful waiter who began to explain dishes which could be prepared meatless, although we're a confirmed carnivorous table). Within minutes of placing our order, dishes began to stream steadily from the kitchen, beginning with a cold *meze* salad of browned cauliflower buds drizzled with tahini sauce and pomegranate syrup (\$5.95), satisfying and deeply flavored, if perhaps a bit on the tart side. The complimentary bread basket (thin wafers of fried Damascus-style bread and warm pita) and side of house pickles (cucumber and beet) and olives was most welcome, partnering well with all food to come. (Editor's Note: As with Egyptian cuisine, if you have any aversion to tart and pickled flavors, skip to the next post below immediately.)

A warm *meze* (or appetizer) was next: Sambossek (\$5), tiny fried pastries stuffed with ground lamb and various earthy spices, resembling nothing so much as mini-empanadas, further connecting to Latin flavor profiles via a pool of cilantro dipping sauce. A Vegetarian Mixed Platter (\$13) was big enough to share, overflowing with lemony-tart grape leaves, chopped shepard's salad, moist bulghur cooked with roasted peppers, eggplant and chickpeas, tiny lentils crowned with caramelized onions and a sizeable mound of expertly-prepared dandelion greens. Blanketing every surface of the dish, including the plate's edge, are copious amounts of chopped parsley, so much that **Tanoreen** has at least earned the Cafe Drake distinction of most prolific use ever of that particular herb.

(A bonus to dining at **Tanoreen** is the neighborhood food shopping; with a span of few blocks, we picked up Italian delicacies, beautiful lamb products, pomegranate molasses, apricot syrup, Greek and Armenian cheeses, olives etc.)

posted by **DRAKE** @ 5:39 PM

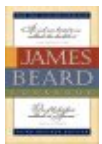
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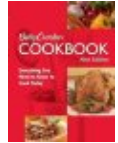
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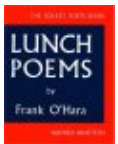


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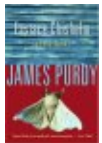
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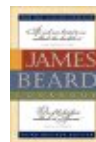
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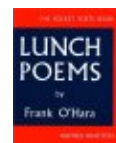


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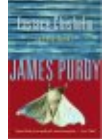
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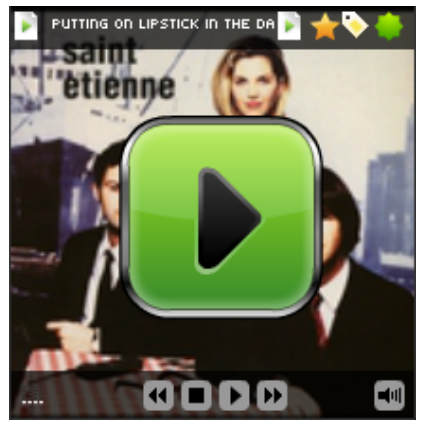
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