



# Fast India

**PIE AND BY** *Top Nosh's many selections include the Greek spinach with feta pie.*

**Top Nosh Cafe** in San Jose quickens appetites with **Indian-style** meat and veggie pies

By **STETT HOLBROOK**

**A** MERICA FANCIES itself the capital of convenience foods, a rather dubious distinction given the country's fondness for junky, overprocessed snacks that are easy to eat but short on flavor and nutrition. Cheap and fast are valued over quality and wholesomeness. Think cheeseburgers, Ding Dongs, egg rolls, Doritos and donuts.

Someone aiming to capitalize on America's love for quick eats would be well served to look to India. India boasts

a rich street-food culture, with quick breads, curries, kebabs and chaat—India's version of tapas.

Sunnyvale's Yasmin Tyebjee grew up in Calcutta and loved the British-influenced savory meat and vegetable pastries of her youth called "patties." So when she set out to open a food business a few years ago, she thought a bigger version of the meat pies would be just the thing to appeal to America's taste for quick, portable foods. Thus Top Nosh was born.

Tyebjee, who began her culinary career seven years ago, starting selling her pies at local farmers markets. Stuffed with an eclectic array of fillings like spicy beef, ratatouille, chicken, apple and cheddar cheese, chicken tikka masala and wild mushrooms, the hand-held pies were not only quick and easy

to eat, they were also far better for you than a 7-Eleven hot dog.

Soon local grocery stores such as Cosentino's, Zanotto's and Draeger's started carrying the pies. Last month, Tyebjee debuted Top Nosh Cafe in Willow Glen, and the time-starved and just plain hungry masses are better for it.

For an order-at-the-counter place, Top Nosh is quite a sharp-looking cafe. The restaurant sports a minimalist, modern décor and gleaming glass display cases and fresh-cut flowers on the tables. Tyebjee works behind the counter and treats customers with kindness and attention that's seldom seen in fast, casual restaurants.

The restaurant makes 10 different kinds of pies. I tried eight of them and loved them all. They sell for \$5.75 apiece—or frozen to go for \$5.

The spicy beef reminds me of a samosa with its hints of cilantro and cumin. Wild mushroom with Gruyère cheese might be my favorite. The molten-cheese and sautéed mushrooms (porcini, shiitake, white) go great together.

The curry-scented chicken, almond and yogurt combination is a winner, too. The crust cooks up flaky and light. Tyebjee uses premium ingredients for her pies including cage-free eggs, unbleached flours, halal beef and free-range chicken.

The meat pies are baked off-site in Santa Clara, frozen and then reheated in the cafe. I also took a handful of frozen pies home and they cooked up beautifully.

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If Top Nosh sold only its savory pies, it would be worth a visit, but the cafe also serves excellent salads (try the arugula, cucumber, radish and feta salad, \$7.90), house-made soups (a cup for \$3.70 or a bowl for \$4.90) and some outstanding fresh-baked pastries.

The meat pies are baked off-site in Santa Clara, but the pastries and cake are made in-house. The lineup changes daily, but be sure to seek out the pecan tart (\$3.50), chocolate-hazelnut tart (\$3.50) and crispy palmiers (\$.95).

But wait, there's more. Top Nosh is also a haven for coffee and tea lovers. The restaurant offers brew-to-order cups of premium Eccolo and Intelligentsia coffee and loose-leaf Teance tea, one of the Bay Area's premier sources for fine tea.

If only all fast food could be this good.

## Top Nosh Cafe

► 1167 Lincoln Ave.,  
San Jose; 408.995.6674

► Open daily

► Savory pies and pastries