

We Tried It: Curried Goat Brains

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We headed to Adda Indian Canteen in Queens, NY to see if this classic Indian dish would be a smart choice.

By [Tara Cox](#) February 04, 2019

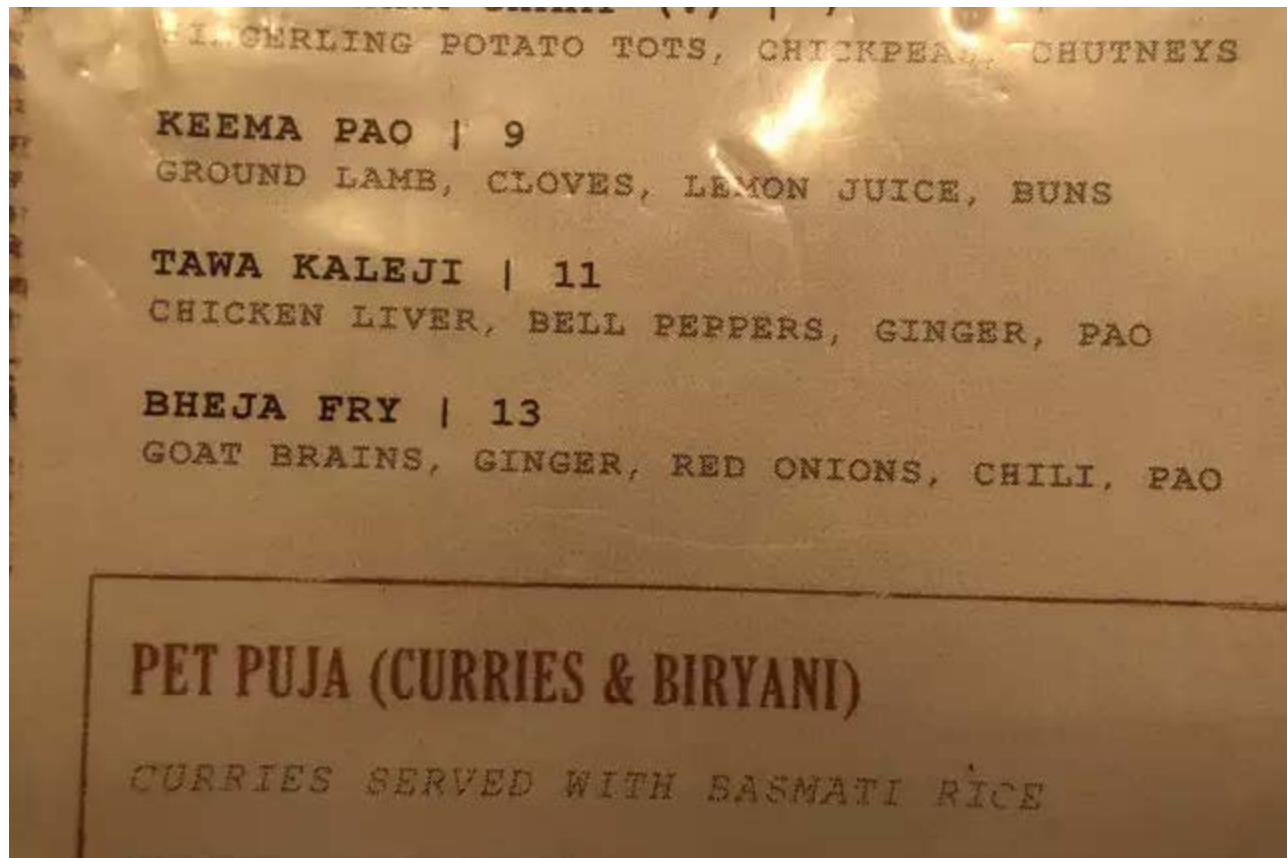
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All the plates!

| Credit: Tara Cox

I'm no stranger to eating brains. I don't mean I'm a zombie or anything, but my first experience eating the soft tissue was in elementary school. As part of our studies of the organ, we dissected calves brains and then got another batch to cook up in the classroom, chicken nugget style, on a borrowed hotplate. Sure, this wasn't the height of culinary sophistication. They just tasted like generic "fried" mush, but 8-year-old me did get some pretty cool bragging rights.



Luckily that experience eliminated any aversion to the delicacy and luckily more elevated culinary experiences have come my way. So, when I heard that Adda Indian Canteen, an Indian restaurant in Long Island City, Queens, was serving goat brains, I was totally on board.

Adda is a casual restaurant, created as a gathering place for conversation and tasty bites – the name even means "a place for people to hang out." Old Indian newspapers line the walls while diners chatted over tables covered with plates of food to share. Executive Chef Chintan Pandya (who also holds the same title at Manhattan's Rahi restaurant) created the menu to replicate the dishes he enjoyed eating when he was growing up in Mumbai.



Adda's Bheja Fry

| Credit: Tara Cox

The Bheja Fry (they don't call it "goat brain dish" on the menu!) comes as an appetizer, served in a bowl giving no hint of its main ingredient. If you're expecting a cartoonish unveiling of a jiggly Jell-O-mold-like millennial pink brain on a silver platter, you will be disappointed. Rather, the dish is blended and unrecognizable, made from a curry base of goat stock, chili, and ginger. The brains are flash fried, simmered in the curry sauce, and served as an enticing dip with toast for scooping on the side. Raymond the restaurant's host told me, "It's like the best scrambled eggs you ever had." – the perfect description, it's warm and custardy, a decadent feel-good food. It's the kind of dish you might want to curl up on the couch with on a rainy night; the more complex cousin of mac and cheese, the king of the comfort foods. I was hooked. I even took the leftovers home and had them for breakfast the next morning!

Why brains? "In Indian culture, we have always used the entire meat of the animal from head to toe. It's not a trend for us, we've been doing it for ages," says the chef. "This particular dish is a fairly typical one found in restaurants in Mumbai, especially at Parsi cafes and Muslim eateries." The name has even evolved into slang for someone or something so intense or mind-boggling they 'fry your brains.'

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Credit: Tara Cox

Adda Menu

Adda's menu consists of sharable dishes

Credit: Tara Cox



Lucknow Dum Biryani (Goat Biryani)

Credit: Tara Cox



The newspaper-covered walls

Credit: Tara Cox



Chili Paneer Tikka, a cheese dish

Credit: Tara Cox



A small but bustling place

If you're still "no way, no how" on the Bheja Fry (you'd be in the minority as Chef Chintan says it's one of their best sellers and they often run out), don't let that turn you off from some of the best Indian food in New York. The more mainstream dishes include Tandoori Poussin (spicy chicken), biryani (a slow cooked rice dish containing a meat such as lamb, chicken or goat) and some of the best saag (spinach) I've ever had. Oftentimes, this dish tastes similar from place to place, but here they add leafy veggies of the season such as mustard greens, creating a zesty and tasty dish that's different than any I've had before. So never fear, even if you're brain-shy, you'll still have a fantastic meal. Now that's using your head.

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