

Chaska: Garden City hot spot achieves perfection



I have been a staunch advocate and number one fan of East Greenwich's **Rasa**, the most southern member of the Rasoi/Kabab & Curry restaurant group. **Chaska**, the newest member of that group has recently stolen my heart ... with soup.

Chaska opened up in Garden City a little over a year ago. I went with some fellow Rasa-groupies opening week and we were all duly impressed the moment we walked in. Chaska is a feast for all the

senses, as the décor is unmatched. Everything is imported and meticulously selected so your eyes don't quite know where to look next. From the art work and light fixtures to the bowls and glasses, everything is gorgeous, unique and adds to the Chaska experience. It is truly something you need to see for yourself. The stellar service, food and drink also did not disappoint and we all vowed to go back to try more menu items, as everything sounded spectacular. Then COVID hit and, like all good plans, my plan to return to Chaska went by the wayside.

Fast forward to November 2020. Christmas shopping brought me, along with a few friends, to Garden City right before the pause. It was that gorgeous Saturday right after Thanksgiving, with a slight chill in the air, but nice enough to make outdoor dining sound exciting. We could not resist the siren call of the glistening igloos on Chaska's patio and were lucky to score one as they were quickly filling up.

The igloo was perfectly cozy for our group of four, especially with the space heater going. Our friendly server quickly took our drink orders and we settled in with the menu, overwhelmed by choice and excitement.

My eyes darted immediately to the house made coriander tomato soup. I cannot resist tomato soup, ever, but certainly didn't want to waste my choice on something I can get at Panera at the expense of dishes like burrata tomato butter chicken and bagara baingan — eggplant simmering in a tangy peanut coconut sauce. But it was lunch, and the air felt chilly so I decided to give it a go.

The soup arrived in a gorgeous hand-crafted bowl and the smell of tomato and warm spices filled our igloo. I put my spoon into the soup and got a bit nervous as it first appeared thin. But as I filled the spoon with soup and lifted it to my lips, my conception of tomato soup changed forever.

It is not without irony that Chaska is hindi for "personal obsession" as this is the perfect description of my reaction to this soup. Chili and ginger added the perfect amount of heat to this soup, as the warmth lingered on my tongue and filled my chest. The combination of tomatoes and Indian spices like coriander and cumin, perfectly pureed together, made each bite a burst of flavor. The silky texture of the soup went beautifully with the garlic cilantro naan. Each bite filled me with warmth, spice and happiness. Despite the germ factor, each of my friends tried the soup and agreed it was the best they've ever had. As I neared my last bite, I wanted to weep. How could it be over already?

I moved to my main course: a warm roasted vegetable salad with fresh greens and a roasted spice blend. Yes it was amazing and healthy and filling and I loved every bite, as I sipped my tamarind margarita. But my palette yearned for one more spoonful of the world's most heavenly tomato soup. I vowed to return soon, despite the impending pause and dropping temperatures.

Sadly that has yet to happen, but soon I will don a hat and heavy blanket and make my way to that friendly, delightful patio in Garden City. In the meantime, my soul remains warm and fulfilled by a beautiful restaurant meal with wonderful friends; something for which - after 2020 - I will never again take for granted.

If you plan to dine in an igloo, I recommend making a reservation. The igloos fit four comfortably and are available for lunch and dinner, weather permitting. Home - Chaska (chaska-usa.com)