

“Annapurna- Goddess of the Harvests”
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Did you know that South Okanagan is becoming a destination for foodies? Well, now you do. Ever tried the Nepali-Indian fusion cuisine? We've got that!

Meet Keshab Sapkota and Ram Bhandari - amazing chefs from Nepal that made Penticton their home. Both came to the valley a few years ago and started off by cooking at various restaurants. They have been nursing a dream of creating their own, unique restaurant where they can use their culinary skills learned in their mothers' kitchens and through years of training. When they moved to Penticton, they made a connection with the South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) to upgrade their language skills and participate in community events. Now SOICS is one of their devoted clients.

Annapurna Restaurant opened just over a year ago on Penticton's Main Street and, since then, people who tried the amazing food keep coming back.

Besides being the name of the famous mountainous range in the Himalayas boasting a peak of over 8,000 meters, in Hindu Annapurna means "the universal and timeless kitchen-goddess", the mother who feeds everyone and protects us from starvation.

The restaurant offers a delicious fusion of Nepali and Indian cuisines inspired by the blend of Tibetan, Indian and Chinese cultures present in Nepal. These complex and flavourful dishes will satisfy both vegetarians and meat lovers. Moreover, since each dish is prepared from scratch using fresh ingredients, the Annapurna team can make your meal without gluten, lactose or nuts.

Here are some Nepali dishes you have to try: Momo dumplings (steamed or pan-fried dumplings), Sekuwa (grilled chicken or lamb with Himalayan spices) and Sherpa soup made with Himalayan bean flour, herbs and garlic. Or how about Nepali style chow mein? Feel like good old butter chicken or lamb sag? Annapurna has it all.

There is a small community of four or five Nepalese families in the valley that get together for the holidays to share food and good time. Two of Ram's sisters own their own restaurants – one in West Kelowna called "Everest" and the other in Vernon named "The Curry Pot", both well loved by the locals.

"There are a lot of things we truly value about our life in Canada but if we had to pick one it would be the protection of human rights allowing you to be who you want to be", revealed Ram and Keshab.

"We used to be job seekers but now we are job creators", shares Keshab with a smile. Two friends now employ up to five staff (depending on the season) and are proud of being able to contribute to the local economy. "Mother who feeds everyone" has two great sons that will not let you leave hungry.