

# Himalayan It On Thick

## Afghan revolution is on the way

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**A**FGHANISTAN'S NOODLE dishes haven't caught on, say, the way spaghetti carbonara has. But just wait. Now that Sayed Shah, the owner of Khyber Pass on St. Marks Place, has opened **Bamiyan** on the corner of 26th St. and Third Ave., it may not be long before asheh naana dagh will be spoken trippingly off our tongues.

To date, the only reason I can figure that Afghan noodle dishes and dumplings have not become popular is that you had to schlep to St. Marks Place to eat them. You might as well ask New Yorkers to go to the Himalayas as ask them to eat on funky St. Marks Place. On the more hygienic upper East Side, at Pamir, the city's other first-rate Afghan restaurant, the menu focuses on the fragrant and buttery basmati rice dishes, the palows of Afghanistan. And, of course, the city is now riddled with Afghan kebab houses. But no one has the noodles and pasta dumplings that Khyber Pass and now

Bamiyan have: slick-surfaced, thin, delicate pastas that are sauced with what we think of as Middle Eastern flavors—yogurt, fried garlic and onions, mint, a ground-meat sauce and a kidney bean sauce.

Aushak is probably the most famous of the so-called dumplings. Formed with dough that is folded instead of neatly pinched closed, they're sort of informal ravioli filled with scallions. Steamed, they are topped with either yogurt-mint sauce that can be further topped with a dab of meat sauce or not.

Mantoo are beef-filled steamed dumplings this time well-sealed to hold their filling flavored with onion, garlic, coriander, parsley and cumin.

Boulanee are defined as "turnovers" on Bamiyan's menu, but they are the same light pasta dumplings deep-fried. Filled with scallions, they're just boulanee. With a filling of lightly sweetened and cinnamon spiced pumpkin they come boulanee kadu. With coriander parsley and green pepper-seasoned potatoes, they're boulanee kachaloo.

Sambusa are fried dumplings filled with beef and split peas. All the fried turnovers and dumplings come with a cool yogurt dipping sauce and cost \$3.50 or \$3.75 for six.

Now those are merely the appetizer noodle dishes. Mantoo and aushak can also be ordered in entrée portions for \$8.50 and there are four plates of fettuccine-width noodles listed under "Authentic Afghan Pasta Dishes." Among these, I simply cannot resist asheh keshida, the noodles dressed with yogurt, bits of garlic fried in butter, and plenty of the butter the garlic has been fried in. Asheh lubia is only slightly less resistible. The same slick noodles topped with a red kidney bean and yogurt sauce. The simplest, asheh naana dagh, is nothing more (and nothing less) than noodles sauced with yogurt then drizzled with mint sizzled in butter. All of these are \$7.50 a big oval plateful.

Bamiyan also has a full compliment of kebabs from \$8.95-\$13.95, a list of vegetarian dishes for \$7.95 and other entrées from \$8.95 to \$11.95.

Particularly interesting is fesenjan, shredded chicken in a thick, mahogany red, sweet-and-sour sauce of walnuts and pomegranate juice. All entrées are served in small portions with a large portion of basmati rice, and the most interesting way to eat your way through the menu is to pas the entrées and put a small amount on your plate of rice.

For dessert, don't miss the smooth rice pudding, with pistachios and rosewater.