

Living in a big city that has so much diversity has many perks, one of which is being able to leave your front door and eat in any part of the world! At least that's the sense you get when you can take a short car ride and be immersed into new cultures and ethnic cuisines via Koreatown, Little India, Little Armenia, Chinatown & Little Italy to name a few.

Venturing out to taste different ethnic foods is always an enlightening experience, as was my latest venture to Little Ethiopia. Recommendations from friends about a family-owned restaurant called Nyala, brought me to this medium sized venue located off Whitworth and Fairfax. You get a calming sense in Nyala with the dim lighting, warm décor and traditional artwork on the walls and there's plenty of seating available with round tables throughout and booths along the perimeter.

Traditional Ethiopian food is vegetable, meat or seafood items placed atop a flatbread and served on a big round plate. It's meant to be eaten with your hands and shared. I liked that Nyala's menu offers 'combination plates' which is the option to sample 3-5 different pre-selected vegetable or meat dishes. These traditional Ethiopian dishes include *Yemiser Wot* – Red lentil stew in seasoned red pepper sauce, fresh garlic, and ginger, *Kik Alecha* – Mild yellow split peas cooked with onions, fresh garlic and ginger and *Doro Wot* – Marinated chicken with lemon, seasoned butter, fresh garlic, onion, ginger, and seasoned red pepper sauce.

My friend and I went with the 'combination plates' option and the presentation of the rich colored items neatly arranged on the flatbread made for a decorative, picture worthy dish. I came to learn the correct terminology for this flatbread: Injera. Along with your grand plate is a basket filled with additional Injera that is sure to fill you up. I was however, slightly taken aback when taking a bite with the Injera from the basket as it was stone cold. I wished it was warm like the one set on the plate as I found the coldness really counteracted with the flavors of the warm items and tainted its texture. Also, all the items – vegetables and meat – were served on one plate, which I didn't mind at all but I suppose if you're vegetarian you'd want to specify your items to be served separately. Be it the vegetables or the meat, all the dishes were delicious, bursting with flavor and truly tasty.

An item on their beverage menu also caught our attention "Tij – Ethiopian honey wine." We decided to get one glass to try and while my friend enjoyed it, I'd have to say it's more of an acquired taste. Another interesting menu item was "Special Traditional Ethiopian Coffee" which is meant for after dinner and traditionally performed as a ceremony. It comes well presented on a bamboo tray with a cute teapot and cups, as well as an incense that sends off a lot of smoke. Very neat! The tempo by this portion of the evening really picked up when a live band took stage up front. It was totally unexpected and the highlight of the evening. They were fabulous and received audience participation. Unfortunately, live entertainment here isn't on a set schedule so you may have to just take your chances on that one.

Overall, my experience of Ethiopian cuisine at Nyala was indeed enlightening and positive. At prices ranging from \$11.95 - \$14.95 and the portions of food guaranteed not to leave you hungry, it's a good pick for an ethnic dinner meal. The staff is pleasant and the atmosphere is perfect for a nice dinner along with traditional flair. If you're interested in checking this restaurant out, they can be found at 1076 S. Fairfax Ave and can be reached at (323) 936-5918. Enjoy!