

Ali family offers “Caribbean Flavas” in Fredericton

FREDERICTON, NB—Naz Ali may go by the name “Nasty” while spinning beats in dance clubs across the country, but you’d have a hard time calling him that after a visit to his restaurant.

Since opening its colorful doors 19 months ago at 123 York St., Ali’s Caribbean Flavas has enjoyed steady business and stream of accolades from customers, celebrities and the industry itself for its authentic Caribbean food, bright design and warm, friendly service.

Ali, a 25-year-old Trinidad native, came to Fredericton five years ago through a business course he was taking at home at a University of New Brunswick satellite campus.

As part of his program, Ali was required to develop a business plan for a start-up business in Fredericton. He came up with two ideas: A DJ service and an authentic Caribbean restaurant.

Ali focused on the restaurant idea, and after receiving a grade of C on the assignment, he took the plan to an independent business analyst for another opinion. He was told the restaurant would fail within two months.

Determined to push ahead with the idea, Ali enlisted the help of twin sisters Zi and Za, both 23, and his parents, mom Zorina and dad Majid.

Naz told *ARN* last month that although Fredericton doesn’t offer much by way of ethnic cuisine, he’s seen a change in the industry—and dining habits—in the past five years.

“People are willing to try new things,” he explained. “We offer authentic food, a warm, inviting atmosphere and we educate our customers about our culture and our food.”

Indeed, Naz said he doesn’t think of himself as a restaurant operator but an “educator” considering many of his customers are unfamiliar with some dishes on his menu.

Items such as jerked and gilled red grouper fish with papaya salsa and pilaf rice (\$20); Creole king fish steak sautéed with onions, peppers, Caribbean green peas and a thick tomato sauce, also with pilaf rice (\$20) or Coal Pot BBQ Chicken: char grilled chicken breast rubbed with jerk seasoning and brushed with a sweet Caribbean tomato sauce and served on a bed of coconut rice (\$19).

A full range of appetizers (\$6-\$7), salads (\$7-\$8)

and desserts (\$5-\$7) are also available. Zorina looks after most of the cooking, but Naz himself can whip up a dish or two when called upon.

If looking for some respite from the heat and spices the food offers customers can opt for one of seven smoothies such as Luv Punch (papaya and orange juice), or Coconut Hula (pure coconut and pineapple). All smoothies are \$4.25.

One other unique beverage offering at Caribbean Flavas is Blue Mountain coffee.

The Jamaican java is considered a premium blend and it is virtually non-existent in Canada, perhaps owing to the \$65 per pound price tag. A single cup here will set you back \$3.50.

And if the food wasn’t enough to provide an authentic Caribbean dining experience, the Ali family has ensured that the experience begins as soon as you walk in the door.

The walls have been painted in bright, warm traditional Caribbean colours such as banana yellow and aqua blue and a running fountain is featured prominently in the middle of the dining area.

“People in Atlantic Canada are very friendly,” said Naz. “But in the Caribbean people are extremely warm and friendly, so we just take it to the next level.”

As mentioned, Naz has a side gig, that as a club DJ who has worked with major artists such as K-OS and 50 Cent.

Not surprisingly, hungry visiting artists have been known to frequent the restaurant while in Fredericton. In addition to K-OS, other well-known entertainers such as The Trailer Park Boys and Canadian rock group The Trews have popped in for a bite. Naz recently found another convenient—and lucrative—way to tie his two businesses together.

Caribbean Flavas “late-night” began operation last month, offering samosas and beef burgers to the hungry club masses from 12:30 to 3:30 a.m.

Naz—who never forgets to remind club goers where to go for food after last call—concedes it can make for some very long days. But it appears to be paying off in places other than the cash register.

This past fall Caribbean Flavas was named one of three finalists out of 150 nominees for the Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick’s tourism excellence award.



Naz Ali, 25, came to Canada five years ago from his native Trinidad and is now co-owner with his two sisters and parents of Caribbean Flavas restaurant.